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DISSERTATION:**

**INCARCERATED HISPANIC FEMALES WITH DISABILITIES:
PERCEIVED BARRIERS RETURNING TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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**INCARCERATED HISPANIC FEMALES WITH DISABILITIES:
PERCEIVED BARRIERS RETURNING TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my parents, Rosario E. Ruiz and Carlos Ruiz. They are loving parents who supported me throughout the years, showed me how to persevere, and gave me strength. My wife Tristan M. Winner, your love, patience, late nights, and support were vital every step of the way. Without your support, this would not have been possible. Mark Ruiz, my brother, my friend, my confident, and protector, throughout this research, I was reminded of our childhood: the good and the bad memories, and the bond we share. Sue Winner, thank you for supporting me through the last days by bringing me snacks and water, especially, when I would not pull myself away from the computer.

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Last, but not least, I want to thank the six young women who entrusted me to tell their story. Without them, this would not have been possible. Through them, I feel like we were able to share our collective story. I hope that my research will give a voice and find a place in field of special education to help Hispanic females with disabilities in and out of residential treatment facilities. I want to help honor their goals and desires as they navigate through the educational system and the world beyond.

**INCARCERATED HISPANIC FEMALES WITH DISABILITIES:
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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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While there is a significant amount of research centered around minority youth and their barriers toward transition back into a traditional school setting, the research paints very broad pictures of the youth who find themselves in these unique circumstances. There is a lack in research that deals with specific subpopulations of the groups targeted by the existing research. While one article may center around minority youth, much of the research would be conducted with males rather than females. While this research is insightful, it does not produce a complete picture. The research presented herein was conducted at a residential treatment facility over the course of six months, and focused on a sample of six Hispanic girls, ages 13-14, who have been identified as needing special education services. This study is meant to be seen through the lens of self-determination theory, which provides insight into the perspective and viewpoint of each participant. When searching for the causes of student and school failure, deficit thinking can be present within the view of those involved. Therefore, the effects of deficit thinking is taken into

consideration within this study. The data was collected via interviews and surveys in which each girl participated, and an analysis of the documents and records located in each girl's educational file. Since the nature of qualitative research calls for the emergence of themes that arise under each research question, the results of the research are presented through the prevailing themes of each of the research questions. This study found, the girls are aware of the challenges that can arise from returning to a traditional school setting, yet recognize what they and teachers can do to ameliorate potentially negative situations. Likewise, the research found that teacher relationships and teacher interactions with students are vital to transition. The study also found that the girls do have goals for the future and the prospect of future peer interactions present a problem as well. While this study provides insight into an overlooked population, it also tells the story of six strong young women who otherwise may have gone unseen.

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Chapter 1

The courts in the United States with juvenile jurisdiction processed a total of 1,058,500 youth cases in 2012. That same year, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reported 45,355 youth between the ages of 13 and 17 years resided in juvenile residential facilities (Sickmund, Sladky, Kang & Puzzanchera, 2015). Many of these youths enter juvenile correctional facilities with intense educational, mental health, medical, and social needs (Quinn, Rutherford, Leone, Osher, & Poirier, 2005).

Black and Latino youth are detained and incarcerated at higher rates than their White counterparts (Piquero, 2008). Studies have shown youth of color are represented at disproportionate rates within the juvenile justice system. In 2010, delinquency cases involving Black youth were disproportionately higher than those for White youth (Puzzanchera & Hockenberry, 2016). Specifically, Black youth cases accounted for 33% of all juvenile offender caseloads, yet the Black youth population was only 16% in the U.S. (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). In contrast, White youth cases accounted for 64% of the caseloads in 2010, however White youth made up 76% of the juvenile U.S. population. (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014).

In 2013, The OJJDP reported the total juvenile population between the ages of 13 and 17 was 43,355 and consisted of 32.2% White, 39.9% Black and 22.6% Hispanic in the U.S. (Hockenberry, 2016). It is important to note that the OJJDP also reported in 2013, 9 out of 10 Hispanic juveniles were racially classified as White; therefore data for this ethnic group is skewed (Sickmund & Puzzanchera, 2014). For example, juvenile court statistics reported that White youth accounted for 76% of the population in the juvenile court jurisdiction, while Blacks accounted for

16% (Hockenberry & Puzzanchera, 2015). This presents skewed data when reporting categories for Hispanics. In 2013, the Hispanic juvenile population between the ages of 10 and 17 in the U.S. was 7,506,019; however, due to racial classification 6,674,005 (89%) of these youths were considered White (Hockenberry & Puzzanchera, 2016).

Equally concerning is the increase in number of adolescent females in the juvenile justice system. Girls comprise nearly one-third of all juvenile arrests in the US and have become one of the fastest growing populations of the juvenile justice system (Pasko, 2011; Russell & Martsen, 2011). Of the 1,058,500 juvenile delinquency cases in 2013, the number of female-involved cases was 293,700 compared to 764,800 male-involved cases (Furdella & Puzzanchera, 2015). Moreover, in 2013 of the 45,355 youth in juvenile residential facilities, 6,949 were females compared to 38,406 males (Hockenberry, 2016). According to 2013 data obtained by the OJJDP, juvenile females in residential facilities consisted of 38.6% White, 33.6% African American, and 19.9% Hispanic in the U.S. (Sickmund et al., 2015). In Texas, the disproportionality in terms of juvenile females in residential among Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics is highlighted and the data is staggering when considering the female population. Females between 13-17 years of age in Texas juvenile residential facilities is as follows; White 25%, Black 32%, Hispanic 42% (Sickmund et al., 2015).

Additionally, many of these youth have significant learning or behavioral problems that require special education and related services under the Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (Quinn et al., 2005). During the 2013-14 school year, the number of students ages 3-21 in public schools receiving special education services was 6.5 million equaling about 13% of all students in the U.S. and accounted for 13% White, 15% Black and 12% Hispanic of the population (Kena et

al., 2016). Although the percentage of males receiving special education services in public schools during the 201-14 school year was greater than females, 16% compared to 9%, females identified with a learning disability (LD) was 44% compared to 37% in males (Kena et al., 2016). The estimated number of children ages 10-20 identified with a LD in juvenile corrections is about 30% compared to 5% in general school population (Sedlak & Bruce, 2010). Furthermore, in a national survey of youth with disabilities in the juvenile correction system, the number of youth identified and receiving special education services is almost four times higher than those served in public school; Emotional Disturbance and Learning Disability are the most common disabilities identified in these youths (Quinn et al., 2005).

Transition is a key area that is often neglected in the educational treatment of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system (Nelson, Jolivet, Leone, & Mathur, 2010). The communities in which youth offenders return are often marked by significant family dysfunction, poverty, limited employment opportunities, poor school judgement, and negative peer relationships (Baltodano, Mathur & Rutherford, 2005). Of those detained, nearly 100,000 are released annually from out-of-home correctional or custodial facilities (Snyder, 2004). Of these youth, 55% are likely to be arrested for another crime within weeks, months, or a year following their release (e.g., Nelson et al., 2010; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). As these youth exit the system and return to their homes, and communities, many face uncertain futures as they work to overcome obstacles associated with community reentry (Fields & Abrams, 2010). Longitudinal studies report offenders experience social problems such as unemployment, low educational attainment, homelessness, and recidivism into the juvenile and adult penal systems (Bullis & Yanoff, 2002; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). The literature overwhelmingly advocates for transitional services to

help juveniles successfully reintegrate; however, a gap in understanding exists between youths' own perception of their reentry needs and the various challenges involved.

Theoretical Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT). A theory based of human motivation, development, and wellness. SDT maintains that certain evolved psychological needs must be satisfied if individuals are to develop to their fullest potential (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008). Furthermore, SDT presumes people innately search for personal and psychological well-being and growth.

Murry (1938) proposed the theory of personality is based on primary (biological) and secondary (psychological) needs. Primary needs, include the ability to gain possessions, money, or food; needs that are essential from a biological standpoint. Psychological needs include the need for nurture, ambition, and achievement; factors that influence individual differences and personality types. The driving force of secondary needs is to overcome obstacles, things, people, and ideas. Thus, need theory is based on the premise that basic human psychological needs exist.

Hull's (1943) drive theory postulated certain basic needs are essential to human satisfaction and survival. When basic needs (food, shelter, clothing, education, and healthcare) are unmet, challenges often present themselves. Building on drive theory, White (1959) conceptualized competence and effectance motivation. Competence is defined as the ability to interact effectively within an environment; effectance is defined as the tendency to explore and influence one's environment. Thus, White (1959) believed competence motivation differed from the biological drives proposed by Hull (1943), and defined competence as the capacity to interact effectively within its environment to help one improve oneself and enhance abilities.

Applying the theories noted above, Deci and Ryan (2000) constructed three elements essential for optimal psychological functioning: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000) defined autonomy as a sense of self-regulation and control over the events of one's life. Competence is defined as an individual's feeling that he or she is capable and competent in at least some areas of functioning, thus providing a sense of confidence and self-respect. Relatedness was seen as a feeling of deep connectedness to the world in which the individual lives.

SDT prescribes that overall psychological health requires the satisfaction of all three needs (Patrick, Canevello, Knee & Lonsbary, 2007). Research has shown that youth offenders are often unable to practice typical developmental skills, such as building healthy relationships, being successful academically, and displaying a positive self-concept. As a result of these inabilities a large number of youth find their way into the juvenile justice system. This may explain why over half of youth released from these systems are likely to recidivate (Fields & Abrams, 2010).

An abundance of research exists to support the linkage between factors and characteristics with juvenile delinquency and recidivism. Furthermore, transitioning back to school and the community settings is met with a myriad of obstacles that inhibit juveniles from living healthy lives into adulthood. The consequences of these deficiencies in the areas of developmental skills result in recidivism and the inability of youth offenders to achieve a healthy and productive transition to adulthood. (Abrams, Shannon, & Sangalang, 2008).

The *transition phase* of community reentry is defined in the literature as a period of time beginning 1 month prior to release and lasting up to 6 months post-release (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). Brock, O'Cummings, and Milligan (2008) defined *transition* in the juvenile correctional system as:

A coordinated set of activities for juvenile offenders designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes successful movement from the community to a correctional setting, from one correctional setting to another, or from a correctional setting to post incarceration activities including public or alternative education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (Brock et al., 2008).

Deficit thinking. As a researcher, my aim is to be aware of how deficit thinking can influence the perceptions of the results. Deficit thinking is a theory that analyzes school failure among students of low socioeconomic status who usually happen to be minorities. (Valencia, 2010). The simple reality of the situation is that when a person approaches a study that involves Hispanic girls involved in the justice system, they will bring with them certain thoughts and assumptions about the situation in which the girls find themselves. In presenting the narratives of the participants, I had to guard against the inherent deficit thinking that could present itself in my own approach to this research. I had to stay mindful of any thoughts that arose from preconceived notions that I might have harbored about the participants based on singular details instead of the totality of the individuals.

The deficit-thinking model states that economically disadvantaged minority students fail as a result of internal deficits or deficiencies (Valencia, 1997). Allegedly, these deficits manifest because of limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings, lack of motivation to learn, and immoral behavior of the student (Valencia, 2010). This long held theory explains failure amongst poor, minority children going back over a century. One should not be surprised that the theory has its roots in racism with many proponents citing genetics, culture, class, and familial socialization

as sources of alleged deficits expressed by the individual student who experiences school failure (Valencia, 1997, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Youth offenders often exit juvenile justice facilities lacking the basic developmental skills needed to promote successful transitions back into the local school system, while others struggle to find safe housing after leaving correctional systems (Altschuler & Brash, 2004). Previous research has examined individual and contextual factors of youth offenders that can either influence or hinder successful transitions. An equally important area of research that needs to be explored is the perceptions of challenges that youth offenders have of their transition from juvenile justice facilities back into the community. Understanding their previous academic experiences and their perceptions of barriers to school success as they transition back to the public setting could prove beneficial in helping make their transition successful. With this information, teachers are able to facilitate a better educational experience for these students. Also, this information provides a more complete picture of the individual coming into the classroom instead of having the student enter the classroom of an unprepared educator.

Detained youth enter correctional settings with lower rates of academic performance, school failure, and increased occurrences of social, emotional, health and behavior needs compared to their peers in the community (Krezmien, Mulcahy, & Leone, 2008; Foley, 2001). It has been reported that nearly 20% to 90% of incarcerated juveniles have an emotional, learning or behavioral disability (Cavendish, 2013). It is estimated that 40% of juveniles in correctional facilities also qualify for an emotional disorder (Zhang, Hsu, Katsiyannis, Barrett, & Ju, 2011). Additionally, 30% of incarcerated juveniles reported as having a LD is 7 times higher compared

to that rate in the general population (Sedlak & McPherson, 2010). In fact, research has indicated that 43% of the youth participating in correctional remedial education programs academically function between a fifth and ninth-grade level (Foley, 2001). Moreover, research has found that among those identified for special education services, a disproportionate number are identified as having an emotional or behavior disorder and/or a LD (Bullock & McArthur, 1994; Quinn et al., 2005; Rutherford & Nelson, 2005). Longitudinal studies have reported offenders experience social problems such as unemployment, low educational attainment, homelessness, and recidivism into the juvenile and adult penal systems (e.g., Bullis & Yanoff, 2002; Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). Additionally, Bullis and Yanoff (2002) found that only 30% were enrolled in school or substantially employed one-year post release.

Lack of school success, disengagement from school experiences, and disruption of one's life are often typical details found in the backgrounds of youth offenders. There are many factors that are associated with male juvenile delinquency. Research indicates that youth of racial and ethnic minorities are twice as likely to commit violent acts (Jensen, Porter, & Howard, 2001; Mashi, 2006). Factors that have been consistently linked to male juvenile delinquency include trauma and stressful life events (Dixon, Howie, & Starling, 2005; Mashi, 2006). Familial factors such as single-parent families, separation from biological parent, and parental imprisonment predict antisocial and delinquent behaviors in male juveniles (Krezmien et al., 2008; Murray & Farrington, 2005;). Other studies have predicated male offenses are a result of poor anger control, low self-esteem, high levels of anxiety and difficulty controlling emotions (Parker, Morton, Lingeleft & Johnson, 2005).

Though much of the research on juvenile delinquency has focused on male juvenile offenders, data suggests that girls' rates of delinquency, particularly acts of violence are increasing (Colman, Kim, Mitchell-Herzfeld, & Shady, 2009; Goodkind, Wallace, Shook, Bachman, & O'Malley, 2009; Martin, Martin, Dell, Davis, & Guerrieri, 2008). Between the years 1980-2006, girls' arrests for assault increased 395% (Goodkind et al., 2009). An examination of trend for offenses leading to court involvement for girls indicate the following : 31% of violent crimes, 42% of vandalism offenses, 39% of weapons offenses, 40% of disorderly conduct offenses, and 31% of runaways leading to juvenile arrest occurred prior to 15 years of age (Gage, Josephs, & Lunde, 2012).

When compared to their male counterparts, there are a number of factors that have been associated with increased rates of delinquency in girls. Race and ethnicity is a significant salient predictor for young females with the most prevalent examples being among African-American and Hispanic girls (Goodkind et al., 2009; Tracy, Kemp & Abramoske, 2009). In 2014, the female juvenile population age 10-15 years in Texas, comprised of 1,169,145. Of these, 48.4% were Hispanic (Puzzanchera, Sladky, & Kang, 2016). Characteristics associated with increased female youth arrests included, low academic achievement, antisocial behavior, familial factors, trauma, sexual abuse, mental health and substance abuse problems (Lederman, Dakof, Larrea, & Hi, 2004; Leve & Chamberlin, 2004; Mullis, Cornille, Mullis, & Huber, 2004). Though research indicates factors such as race, ethnicity, low academic achievement and antisocial behaviors as significant predictors for arrests in females, little research has examined the experiences of Hispanic girls identified with ED or LD or a combinations of the two. The current lack of research in this specific subset of the juvenile population warrants further exploration. Studies to date focus primarily on

predictors of delinquency and outcomes of reentry services which provide valuable quantitative data; however, more research is needed to understand the perceptions that female, Hispanic youth with disabilities have in regards to their reentry needs and the various challenges involved.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the anticipated challenges and barriers detained Hispanic females with disabilities hold for their transition as they exit a residential treatment center and reenter a traditional school setting. The particular focus of this study is on the expectations these young females hold about their academic experiences, teacher interactions, and peer influences. This study will specifically attempt to describe how Hispanic females with disabilities understand their cognitive processes, interpersonal interactions, and social context. These areas can pose challenges to reentry in their next educational environment.

Positionality of Researcher

The positionality of the researcher is significant in determining the research design and methodology for this study. As a special education teacher, I bring my own beliefs, values, and experiences to this study. I have had numerous opportunities to teach and interact with youth returning to the school setting from RTC. My highest priority is keeping student-driven decisions first. I look at the big picture: home life, where the student comes from, their routine, and more importantly, how I can best serve students. It is my belief that my role as a special education teacher is to serve and advocate for each student with whom I come into contact. Furthermore, I am also there to provide a voice to help bridge a gap between what is known about this population of youth and the educators they will encounter.

I have accomplished this through my sincere interactions with both youth and professionals with whom they work. Moreover, I feel that my life experiences have provided me the opportunity to look at various situations through different lenses. From these different lenses I bring a variety of perspectives to school. For example; I am a Hispanic female. I, in my youth, struggled academically and emotionally both in and out of school. I am an educator, an advocate for students with disabilities, and minorities, and have myself, been previously involved in the criminal justice system. However, I am also conscious of the various cultural groups to which I belong, and am aware of the influence those have on my perceptions. I am aware of the biases I hold as of a result of marginalization and privilege, and how they occur in schools. In addition, I am conscious of how the dominant culture in an area benefits in the current system, and how that benefit can be a detriment to other culture groups.

Identifying youths' perceptions and the need for self-determination is intricately connected to my agenda within this study. I also intend to help make a change for Hispanic female youths with disabilities who will transition back to school settings and the communities in which they live. SDT has its place in the area of incarcerated youth and transition. SDT asserts that humans have three basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, relatedness), each is essential because it contributes independently to healthy psychological growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When these needs are not met in positive and pro-social ways, recidivism and delinquency will present itself. The theoretical framework of SDT will guide this research study and will be discussed further in the review of the literature.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is that it sought to expand knowledge in the area of the challenges Hispanic females with disabilities perceive in transitioning from short-term RTC placements to a traditional school setting. This study also sought to aid students' educational support, and facilitate successful reentry to a traditional setting. It is difficult to overcome personal, and social barriers when attempting to make the transition from a RTC back to a school setting. Therefore, this study will provide a personal account of what youth offenders have encountered and the obstacles that prevent them from moving forward in their lives, especially lives without further placements.

Additionally, the study addresses the gap that currently exists within the literature for female youth offenders with disabilities, particularly females of color. This study also attempts to expand the limited research currently available; this, in turn can allow for a deeper understanding of the differences between male, and females, across a variety of populations such as different minority groups, and those with disabilities.

Understanding the impact of these experiences can inform schools and teachers, therefore providing knowledge that can assist with decisions about placement, transition activities that are needed for successful transitions, and increased student school success. Furthermore, regardless of the extent of the services provided to assist youth with transitions, if efforts are not perceived as valid by the youth for whom they are designed, it is unlikely that they will result in the desired outcomes. This study can assist practitioners in identifying interventions and designing activities to support youth in their transition back to school.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following questions crucial to understanding the perspectives of Hispanic females with disabilities on their lived experiences and the perceived challenges to transition back to a school setting.

1. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about academic experiences for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?
2. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about teacher interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?
3. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about peer interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?

Definitions

The following is a list of terms found in the literature when discussing juvenile offenders and disabilities.

- *Transition Phase of Community Reentry*: Begins 1 month prior to release and lasts up to 6 months post release (Altschuler & Brash, 2004).
- *Transition in the Juvenile System*: A coordinated set of activities for a juvenile offender, designed within an outcome-oriented process. This promotes successful movement from the community to a correctional setting, from one correctional setting to another, or from a correctional setting to post incarceration activities including; public or alternative

education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing education, adult services, independent living, or community participation (Brock et al., 2008).

- *Juvenile*: Youth at or below the upper age of juvenile court jurisdiction in a particular state. In most states, individuals are considered adults when they reach their 18th birthday (OJJDP, n.d.).
- *Temporary Managing Conservatorship (TMC)*: Refers to decision making authority with respect to the child rather than a specific timetable for possession of the child. A managing conservator has broader authority with respect to making decisions and, thereby, can exercise greater influence over the child and provide more guidance with respect to the avenues available to the child (Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, n.d.).
- *Permanent Managing Conservatorship (PMC)*: A legal term in Texas used in child custody cases. It means that a judge appoints a person to be legally responsible for a child without adopting the child. The court can give PMC to someone other than a parent, including DFPS, a relative, a close family friend, or a foster parent. PMC can only be given by a judge. The judge decides the rights and responsibilities, depending upon the specific situation (TDFPS, n.d.).
- *Placement or Juvenile Justice Facility*: Publically or privately owned juvenile placement (OJJDP, n.d.).
- *Placement Status*: Categories of juveniles held in placement facilities. For example, juveniles who have been convicted versus juveniles who are detained, awaiting hearing (OJJDP, n.d.).

- *Residential treatment center (RTC)*: A facility that focuses on providing some type of individually planned treatment program for youth (substance abuse, sex offender, mental health, etc.) in conjunction with residential care. Such facilities generally require specific licensing by the state that may require that treatment provided is Medicaid-reimbursable. In data years 1997, 1999, and 2001 these facilities are included in the Group Home category (OJJDP, n.d.).
- *Learning Disability (LD)*: A special education disability category defined in law as a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or do mathematical calculations (IDEA, 2004).
- *Emotional Disturbance (ED)*: A special education disability category defined in law as a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance:
 - a. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors;
 - b. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers;
 - c. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
 - d. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or
 - e. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems (IDEA, 2004).

For this current study, when discussing transition, the focus is on the latter part of the definition to highlight youths' perceived barriers to their transition from a RTC back to a school setting.

Limitations and Delimitations

This study is limited in its generalizability. The study will include Hispanic females who have been identified needing special education services for ED or LD, and who are between the ages of 12 and 15, currently residing in a central Texas RTC. Therefore, findings cannot be transferred to other ages, additional disability categories, furthermore, the scope of this study focuses on Hispanic females and results cannot be transferred to other cultures.

Summary

Transitioning back to school and the community settings from RTCs can be met with a myriad of obstacles that inhibit juveniles from living healthy lives into adulthood. A large number of youth often find their way back into the juvenile justice system and various types of placements. The literature overwhelmingly advocates for transitional services to help juveniles successfully reintegrate. Studies to date focus primarily on outcomes of reentry services and provide valuable quantitative data; however, little is known about youths' own perceptions of their reentry needs and the various challenges involved. An abundance of research exists to support the link between factors and characteristics with juvenile delinquency and recidivism. However, although research provides outcomes for youths and program services, limited research exists that examines the transition process from the youth's perspective. Furthermore, there is a significant gulf in the research that either neglects or skews the information regarding Hispanics and females;

highlighted aspects of that chasm and the story of a population that is often disregarded are detailed in this study.

Chapter 2

Research should begin with a literature review to share with readers the results of other studies that are closely related to the one being undertaken; therefore, providing an ongoing dialogue in the literature while filling in the gaps and extending prior knowledge (Creswell, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). One of the fundamental elements of this study involves the lived experiences from youth perspectives: this study delved into the thoughts and feelings that Hispanic females with disabilities hold about the situation in which they find themselves; as well as the challenges that contribute to barriers the individuals perceive in regards to their transition back to a school setting. Therefore, the literature examined by the researcher encompasses the many elements of those circumstances: risk factors that can promote or hinder successful transitions and transition experiences of incarcerated youth

The literature review begins with an investigation of the studies that led to the development of self-determination theory (SDT), followed by the theoretical perspective of deficit thinking to explain school failure and the shortcomings that put these youth at a disadvantage with regard to education. These are the lenses that provide the rationale for the current study under examination, along with the implications for education. Next, an examination of the risk factors associated with juvenile offenders will be offered. An overview of the research on the transition process back to the community settings from juvenile justice settings will then be provided. This will be followed by an in-depth literature review on studies that identify the perceived barriers of youth offenders with and without disabilities transitioning back to the community and school settings. It is important to note that most of the literature presented in this chapter dealing with juvenile offenders pertains to mixed gender populations. Attempts to find literature that pertained to female

only populations were made, but none were found. Procedures and best practice for identifying qualitative research for article inclusion in the literature review will be discussed. Lastly, SDT is presented and was placed into the constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Motivational Theories Emerging from Drive Theories

Drive theory. Motivational theories fall under a category of psychological theories that address two specific aspects of behavior: energization, which could be explained as “needs,” and direction, which could be referred to as “satisfaction.” Early theories of motivation sought to examine self-determination and the role that it plays in human behaviors and experiences; furthermore, research of the subject suggests that early theories focused on the nature of drive. Murray (1938) proposed the theory of personality based on needs and motives and suggested that personalities are reflections of behaviors that are controlled by needs. According to Murray(1938), needs are conceptualized as anything that moves an individual to action. Primary needs include the ability to gain possessions, money, or food; needs that are essential from a biological standpoint. Psychological needs include the need for nurture, ambition, and achievement; factors that influence individual differences and personality types. Thus, Murray’s theory asserted that drives move people toward positive psychological development such as self-actualization, yet can also drive people toward less adaptive functioning such as greed.

Hull (1943) asserted that all behaviors are based on four primary drives: hunger, thirst, sex, and the avoidance of pain. These drives are the catalyst for the activation of behaviors that aid in meeting basic needs that are essential to satisfaction and survival. Specifically, Hull (1943) postulated that these drives provide the energy or need for behavior as opposed to providing the direction or satisfaction. Moreover, the direction results from a bond that forms from the drive

stimuli and behaviors. However, while soundly researched and concise, drive theory exhibited limitations when Hull could not account for the inconsistency between the result of his animal experiments and the basic tenets of his theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Not all behaviors were said to be motivated by a primary drive stimulus, rather behavior could be motivated by other sources, such as secondary reinforcement. Further studies would show that there was a reinforcing value to exploration and manipulation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Motivation theory. Building on drive theory, a different concept of motivation emerged. Intrinsic motivation was conceptualized in a variety of ways; much of the discussion on intrinsic motivation has been situated in empirical and psychoanalytic psychology, and based on the premise that organisms approach and function by independent, non-drive-based energies (Deci & Ryan, 1985). White (1959) proposed effectance motivation, which serves to energize a range of non-drive behaviors. This is also paramount in a child's development. In terms of psychoanalytic psychology, White (1963) reinterpreted Freud's idea of independent ego energy and conceptualized effective motivation as a child striving to master critical conflicts in its life. Deci and Ryan (1985) would conclude that intrinsic motivation is situated in that organism's approach and functions most effectively in situations that provide a level of stimulation.

Optimal arousal. Hebb (1955) hypothesized the need for an optimal level of physiological arousal and suggested functioning is most efficient when there is optimal arousal. Levels of arousal can have the opposite effect. For example, Deci and Ryan (1985) stated if the arousal response is too high, then the need for it to be decreased would be strengthened. However if the arousal is too low, then a response that increases will be strengthened. For example: if a man is walking in the woods and encounters a bear, arousal will be more than

optimum for effective functioning. Assuming his arousal is not crippling high, and he does not freeze up, when he leaves the bear by fleeing in fright his level of arousal would lower and be reinforced. However, if that same man was at a zoo wandering around bored and he encountered a bear safely behind a barrier, his arousal may be reinforced and increase toward optimum, as he got closer to the bear. (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Theorist Fiske and Maddi (1961), similar to Hebb suggested organisms' seek to maintain an optimal level of arousal; however they believed that optimal level varies depending on the organisms degree of wakefulness. When organisms have discrepancies, these would act as a motivator for the organism to restore optimal arousal by engaging in certain behaviors.

Optimal incongruity. Other theories have asserted that people are motivated to approach or reduce incongruity and dissonance between stimuli (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory asserts that when two dissonant cognitions engage without harmony, it can motivate people to behave in ways to reduce or avoid the situation or stimuli that cause further discomfort. Kagan (1972) posited behaviors are motivated by a need to reduce uncertainty and suggested people gather information of future expectations to avoid unpleasant or painful events. The theory of optimal incongruity contends that behaviors are intrinsically motivated and involve the reduction of uncertainty. When optimum incongruity is reached, the dissonance, or incongruity between stimuli is reached; however this theory does not address human needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Competence. Other theorists conceptualized intrinsic motivation by needs and effects that focused on a psychological rather than a physiological nature (Deci & Ryan, 1985). This approach garnered much attention and was used to formulate and interpret empirical research, as

well as integrate theory in the field of psychology. This approach focused more on human needs for free and effective interactions with the environment and feelings of interest and enjoyment that are integrally involved with these needs. (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Woodworth's (1918, 1958) behavior-primacy theory proposed that behavior is ongoing and primary and is aimed at producing an effect on the environment. In terms of motivation, there is the implication that there is a need for being effective in one's environment interactions (White, 1959).

White (1959) proposed the need for effectance as a basic motivational propensity that energizes a range of non-drive based behaviors. Effectance is the energy of need behind the activity and the subsequent effect as the feeling of efficacy. White (1959) used the term "competence" to connote the structures through which effectance motivation operates; competence is the accumulated result of one's interactions with the environment, through one's exploration of, learning and adaption to said environment. Deci (1975) suggested that the need for competence leads people to seek and conquer challenges that are optimal for their capacities and that competence acquisition results from interacting with stimuli that are challenging. It is worth noting that when speaking in a biological capacity, the term competence refers to the capability for effective interactions with the environment that ensure the organism's maintenance (Deci, 1975).

It is important to consider the difference between drive and effectance motivation. Drives are cyclical; once they are satisfied they do not reemerge immediately, hours or days can go by without these drives returning. Effectance motivation is persistence and available to occupy, which means that it is not as intense and as immediate like hunger and thirst. It is persistent and can be interrupted by other needs. (Deci, 1975)

Interest and excitement flow. Another addition to the development of intrinsic motivation theories focuses on affect and emotions. Izard (1977) noted ten different human emotions, each involved in the motivation of behavior and each having its own experimental component. Among emotions, interest and excitement are the basis of intrinsically motivated behavior, joy is said to play an important relevant, though, secondary role. Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) emphasized that intrinsically motivated activities are characterized by enjoyment, those for which the reward is ongoing experience of enjoying the activity. The more interest one directs towards an object plays an important role in the amplifying the direction of one's attention. Excitement activates many types of investigatory or manipulative behaviors, especially under conditions of novelty and freedom from other pressing demands of drives or emotions (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

Need for Self-Determination

Essentially, the term "self-determination" refers to the experience of freedom of initiating one's behavior; this is integral to intrinsic motivation. For one to be intrinsically motivated they must feel free from the pressures of outside forces like the promise of rewards or contingencies upon their actions (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Moreover, one must be operative when their action is autonomous and not subject to controls, conditions, or reinforcement that can come about because of their action (Deci & Ryan). Theorists propose that intrinsically motivated activity is based on the need for self-determination.

Man's primary motivational propensity is to be effective in producing changes in his environment. Man strives to be a causal agent, to be the primary locus of causation for, or the origin of, his behavior; he strives for personal causation. (deCharms, 1968, p.269)

According to deCharms this basic desire to control of one's fate is a contributing factor in all motivated behaviors; though it is the central force only for intrinsically motivated behavior. To further accent his point, deCharms uses Heider's (1958) concept of perceived locus of causality. Essentially, a person will consider themselves to be intrinsically motivated if they are the ones who cause their own behavior. Conversely, when an external event happens that requires them to act, they will consider themselves controlled by outside force.

Fundamentally, this postulates that a basic motivational propensity for self-determination is related to the need for effectance (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Angyal (1941) suggested human development can be characterized in terms of movement toward greater autonomy and this movement depends in part on the continual acquisition of a variety of competencies; to truly be self-determined, one must have skills to manage various elements of one's environment or they will be controlled by them.

Works in the psychology of control indicate people have a need to experience control over their environment or their outcome (Deci, 1980). Control refers to a contingency between one's behavior and their perceived outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci suggested the intrinsic need that was operative in various control studies was not a need to control the environment, but rather a need to be self-determining, that is, to have a choice. A person has control when behaviors reliably yield to intended outcomes therefore they have a modicum of self-determination as far as their actions are perceived (Deci).

Self Determination Conceptualized

According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation is integral to self-determination and is based in the quality of human functioning. Intrinsic motivation involves the experiences of

choice that leaves a person with the feeling of being able to conquer challenge which they encounter, thus feeling competent (Deci & Ryan 1985). This satisfaction or need becomes a feeling that individuals begin to seek out.

Competence, relatedness and autonomy. Proposed by Deci (1975), cognitive evaluation theory integrated empirical findings that were related to the effects of external events on intrinsic motivation. Deci, along with Ryan, (1980) elaborated and refined the theory which Ryan (1982) took even further by including events that serve to initiate and regulate the internal causes for motivation as well as the ones that are external. This theory, known as Cognitive Evaluation Theory (1975), describes the effects of events that initiate or regulate behavior on motivation and motivational processes (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The theory suggests that we should place important consideration for the characterization of the initiating or regulatory events that are the reasons for a person's experience of self-determination and competence. The theory is presented in three propositions: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan).

Autonomy. Deci and Ryan (1985) defined autonomy as a sense of self-regulation and control over the events of one's life. Autonomy is related to the need of one to be self-determining. Autonomy was theorized to be a cognitive construct which represents the degree to which one is self-determining with respect to one's behavior. Deci and Ryan also proposed that events which lead to an internal perceived locus of causality and enhance intrinsic motivation are those that facilitate self-determination which supports autonomy.

Competence. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), competence is defined as an individual's feeling that he or she is capable and competent in at least some areas of functioning, thus providing a sense of confidence and self-respect. Competence relates to people's intrinsic

need to be competent and master optimal challenges. One's perceived competence is typically increased when one succeeds or gets positive feedback, so one feels some determination with respect to the activity (Deci & Ryan).

Relatedness. Deci and Ryan (1985) asserted that relatedness was seen as feeling of deep connectedness to the world in which the individual lives. Relatedness refers to the events that are relevant to the initiation and regulation of behavior. These events have three aspects that may be differently prominent to different people or to the same person at different times. These aspects are the informational, the controlling and the amotivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). It is the prominence of these aspects that affects the changes in the apparent causality and apparent competence that alters the person's willingness to act according to their will without the influence of outside sources, or intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan).

The three constructs interact with one another, in turn, having a direct influence on a person's behavior. Informational aspects provide feedback, which determine a person sense of choice, controlling aspects, pressure people to behave, think or feel in particular ways. This promotes a controlled determining functioning.

Deficit Thinking

According to Valencia (1997, 2010) there are six characteristics of deficit thinking: blaming the victim, oppression, pseudoscience, temporal changes, educability, and heterodoxy. However, for this study's purpose I will focus on victim blaming and educability. Victim blaming, according to Valencia (1997), is the backbone of deficit thinking. Valencia (1997) makes reference to the book *Blaming the Victim* by William Ryan. According to Valencia (1997) this book exposed the ideological base of deficit thinking: the more powerful of society blame the innocent. He also

outlined how the theory of deficit thinking is converted into action. First, victim-blamers identify social problems. Second, they conduct a study in order to find out how the disadvantaged and the advantaged are different. Third, once they identify the differences, they define them as the causes of the social problem. Fourth, they set governmental intervention in motion to correct the differences, deficiencies. (Valencia, 1997, 2010).

For this study, the process could unfold in the following manner: a Hispanic female with low achievement, and a disability placed in an RTC, could be identified as the disadvantaged victim. Studies are then conducted to find out how the disadvantaged contrast with the advantaged females. These studies often identify differences (i.e., ethnicity, disability, their placement in an RTC, and their label identifying them as “at risk.”) An intervention is set into motion to correct the deficiency of the victim rather than looking at other factors such as systemic causes, and programming that perpetuate low achievement.

Educability is another important characteristic of deficit-thinking that factors into this study. Valencia (2010) maintained that deficit thinking describes behavior in pathological and dysfunctional ways that refer to deficiencies, limitations, shortcomings in individuals, family and culture. While explaining behaviors, deficit thinkers believe the cause of alleged behaviors lie within the individual factors, such as limited intelligence or linguistic deficiencies (Valencia). At its core, deficit thinking entails describing, explaining, and predicting the continuation of deficiencies that affect the individuals being examined if intervention does not occur (Valencia 1997, 2010). The fourth component of the theory offers modifications of behavior a prescription to address the problems affecting the populations under examination. The thinking process of a proponent of deficit thinking would look as such: describe- “A student struggles with transition, is

in special education, and has trouble interacting with teachers,” explain- “She is currently in foster care and living in a residential facility. She was sexually abused when she was younger, and has had different family struggles,” predict- “Because of these hardships and given her current circumstance, she is going to struggle when she leaves the residential facility,” modify- “It is probably for the best that she be placed in a behavior class to try and keep her out of trouble.”

Implications for Education

Within the field of education, the theories of intrinsic motivation and self-determination can extend beyond the overall classroom environment. One factor that contributes to motivation is the interpersonal context of teachers in the educational setting. According to SDT, a teacher can influence a student’s type of motivation by supporting or thwarting students’ basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000, 2002). Research shows that supportive teacher-student relationships can improve outcomes for students (Wentzel, 2002). Additionally, studies show that good teacher-student relationships can result in productive classrooms (Davis, 2003; Opdenakker, Maulana, & den Brok, 2012). That is, when students feel supported in their needs, they are more likely to feel motivated, This is a desire that is believed to be intrinsic to student's nature and is thought to be a motivator in the educational process. However, when students feel pressured to engage in activities and act in certain ways, they display a controlled type of motivation which results from controlled-oriented teaching behaviors (Aelterman et al., 2013). Recognizing these teachers’ characteristics is crucial to student motivation and the educational process.

Another factor that contributes to intrinsic motivation and successful learning is choice within the classroom. Providing choices is one way teachers’ try and motivate learning and

student's experiences in school (Deci & Ryan, 1985). In regards to SDT, research suggest that a student's' needs for autonomy, competence and, relatedness increase when teachers minimize coercion and interference, and show an understanding for students' perspectives and feelings, provide rationales for task and offer choices (Katz & Assor, 2006). If these needs are not met with the choice(s) given to students, student intrinsic motivation may not occur (Assor, Kaplan, Roth, 2002). For example, a study conducted with elementary and middle school-aged students on engagement found the more relevant choices were to their goals, the higher engagement and affect rather than the amount of choices they were given (Assor, Kaplan, Roth, 2002). Furthermore, SDT suggest that autonomy-supportive teaching is conducive to engagement and optimal learning in educational contexts (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Su & Reeve, 2011).

Student psychological well-being has also been linked to academic autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When academic autonomy is low, this can result in higher levels of anxiety and negative coping strategies in school; whereas higher levels of autonomy are associated with positive coping strategies (Ryan & Connell, 1989). If students are given opportunities to make choices and self-direction both inside and outside of school, this can be crucial to their psychological development (Steinberg, 1990). Another area of well-being that influences student academic achievement and success is a sense of belongingness. Belongingness in the literature has been shown to include support from friends, peers and teachers (Van Ryzin, Gravely, Roseth, 2007). For example, Wentzel, Barry and Caldwell (2004) found that the quality of school friendships led to higher levels of academic achievement and school competence.

When teachers can provide classrooms and youth with interactions that foster opportunities for self-determination, and intrinsic motivation, there can be vast benefits. Previous research

conducted on self-determination in the classroom, such as teacher-student, peer-peer relationships, and student choice that foster academic autonomy and belongingness in the classroom, have shown to influence student engagement. Classroom environments that are supportive and inviting can have positive implications on students' learning. Academic autonomy, competence, and relatedness are important contributors to adolescent achievement and development.

Risk Factors of Incarcerated Youth and Recidivism

Previous research has examined individual and contextual factors of youth offenders that either influence or hinder successful transitions. According to Coll, Throbro, and Hass (2004) risk factors are conditions that are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes. Psychosocial development entails the healthy development of humans from infancy to late adulthood in the areas of emotional, personality, and social development. This development influences family, community, culture, and society. Coll et al. (2004) conducted a 1-year study of risk factors and how these risk factors interacted with other aspects of life for youth offenders detained in residential treatment facilities. The total sample included 86 participants: 90% White; 5% Hispanic, and 5% African American; with 35% female and 65% male, and 14.7 years of age as the mean. Results showed that an alarming number of detained youth (78%) scored low for purposeful development. These scores indicated detained youth felt a basic lack of purpose about their lives, and for life and humankind in general. Being dissatisfied with their lives, accomplishments to date, and perceptions that their lives had been misdirected reflected this lack of purpose. This study also found that 64% of the detained youth scored low on relational development, with 25% scoring below the 10th percentile. Relational development scores reflected

the youths' inability to care for and share thoughts and feelings with another and kept an emotional distance within relationships (Coll et al., 2004).

In an exploratory study of risk factors of youth offenders and their relation to recidivism, Carr and Vandiver (2001) found specific factors that differentiated non-repeat offenders from repeat offenders. Their study constituted 76 youth offenders between 11 to 17 years of age, representing 51% African American; 13% Hispanic; and 13% White who were charged with various crimes from misdemeanors to felonies. Participants answered a 23-item risk factor measurement to assess six risk constructs found in the literature: personal characteristics, familial conditions, drug use, peer selection, school attendance, and school difficulties (Carr & Vandiver, 2001). The results indicated personal characteristics: positive self-concept, high self-esteem, and positive attitude towards school and support-seeking behavior, and familial conditions: structure and rules in the household and family support and guidance were significantly lower in differentiating between repeat offenders and non-repeat offenders (Carr & Vandiver, 2001).

Sharpe and Litzelfelner (2004) examined juvenile characteristics and various risk factors as predictors of re-offense for first time juvenile offenders. Targeting first time offenders living in the Midwest during a 3-½ year period, 157 juvenile offenders between the ages of 10-15 years were identified. The majority of the sample were males (77%) with 57% of these being White and 25% being African American. Four factors emerged as statistically significant predictors for a first-time re-offense. Predictors depended on: the custody the youth was in at the time of the offense, whether the youth was in the custody of the county or state, if the youth had committed a drug crime, if the youth had prior charges or was known to participate in gang related activity. If these

factors were present in the cases, then reoffending was more likely to occur (Sharpe & Litzelfelner, 2004).

In a follow-up study, Galley (2012) examined previously established risk factors. These risk factors included offense history, history of abuse, neglect, family involvement, parental criminal history, program completion progress, and length of treatment stay to guide further understanding in recidivism among juvenile offenders. During the time of study, 177 males were detained in a residential treatment facility for juvenile offenders in the Midwest between 2005 and 2008. Risk factor data was collected at admission and upon release to the RTC. Youth were categorized in three groups based on offense: sex offender, substance abuse, and general offenders. Overall, 23.4% of the youth recidivated within 24 months post release. Type of offender had a significant effect on recidivism rate with 32.9% of general offenders recidivating, compared to the 19% of those who were substance abusers, and 3% of those who were sex offenders. Other findings indicated that parental criminal history also played a role along with youth's placement (e.g., community versus home) (Galley, 2012).

Other risk factors are important to recognize. For instance, the neighborhood in which a child lives, negative life events, and peer associations can influence social development. Preddy, Vitulano, Elkins, Grassetti, and Wismatt (2012) examined effects of negative life events, neighborhood problems, and perceived best friend (peer) delinquency on child-reported delinquency. The data measured on self-reported and best friend's delinquency consisted on a 14-item measure on previously engaged behaviors of self and estimates of best friend's criminal engagement. Neighborhood problems were chosen from a widely used and well-established measure of neighborhood characteristics. Negative life events comprised a 26-item 'yes or no'

self-report questionnaire on experiences such as parental divorce and familial incarceration. The findings correlated with high levels of perceived best friend delinquency, negative life events and neighborhood problems. Older children experienced more negative life events than younger children and boys reported higher levels of perceived best friend delinquency than girls. Best friend delinquency was found to influence the associations between neighborhood problems and negative life events and child delinquency (Preddy et al., 2012). In order to determine the effects and examine perceived best friend delinquency factors, a multiple regression model was utilized. It was estimated that best friend delinquency and race (minorities) were found to be associated with delinquency (Preddy et al., 2012). However, when simultaneously examining the associations, best friend delinquency was the strongest of the three risk factors (Preddy et al., 2012).

Transition Experiences of Incarcerated Youth

Transition is a key area that is often a neglected aspect in the education and treatment of youth with and without disabilities in the juvenile justice system (Nelson et al., 2010). Academic achievement and successful transitions from juvenile justice facilities back to the community and school settings can act as protective factors against the likelihood of a youth offender recidivating. However, lack of school success, disengagement from school experiences, and disruption of one's life are often typical occurrences in the lives of youth offenders. Using descriptive and statistical procedures, Krezmien et al. (2008) studied the achievement levels, mental health needs, and special education status of incarcerated youth. This study used data from an intake protocol form, reading and math obtained from the Woodcock-Johnson III Test of Achievement (WJ-III), and the Gray Silent Reading Test (GSRT). The sample included 555 incarcerated male youth, who resided at a juvenile correctional facility located in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Racial

distribution was 61% African American; 26.2% White; 6.9% Hispanic; and 5% as mixed or other. Nearly 45% of these youth were enrolled in special education. Of those receiving special education services, 44% were identified as having an EBD, 26.4% with identified LDs, and 17% identified as having OHI. Results from the intake protocol found academic and mental characteristics predictive of special education status (Krezmien et al., 2008). Additionally, results indicated serious academic and mental health problems of incarcerated youth, high rates of disabilities and mental health problems, and a high number of African American males (Krezmien et al., 2008). The results from this study support previous research on the high rates of youth with disabilities in juvenile correctional facilities, high rates of mental health history, and the disproportional racial composition of this population (Quinn et al., 2005; Teplin et al., 2002).

In another study, Unruh and Bullis (2005) examined the differences between female and male juvenile offenders with disabilities in terms of the barriers they faced in their transition from juvenile justice facilities back into the community. The longitudinal study included data collected from August 1999 to February 2004, for 72 females and 276 males who were incarcerated in the Oregon juvenile justice facility. The variables for the study used to identify the barriers to transition were classified across six ecological domains: person-related, disability-related, employment-related, education-related, family/social-related, and criminal history-related. The results of the study indicated certain barriers that were statistically significant (.05 alpha levels with ratio odds ranging from 2.74 to 5.08). Key results for the study found that females were: (a) 3.67 times more likely to have parenting responsibilities than males (b) 2.79 more likely to run away from home or a residential facility (c) 2.75 times more likely to have a history of suicide risk, and (d) 2.44 times

more likely to have a prior history of physical or emotional abuse than males (Unruh & Bullis, 2005).

Sander, Sharkey, Olivarri, Tanigawa, and Mauseth (2010) examined school experiences associated with risk for juvenile delinquency. This study was unique in that it presented the perspective of the juvenile offender. Using semi-structured qualitative interview methods, participants for this study were recruited from a Texas and California juvenile justice center. Data were collected on 12 males and six females between the ages of 13-17. Nine participants resided in Texas and seven resided in California. In terms of ethnicity and race, eight youth identified as White (non-Latino), five identified as Mexican-American; and three identified as mixed ethnicity or race. This study produced three main themes: the importance and limitations of supportive relationships, low father involvement, and low engagement that resulted in limited success in school was disappointing to the adolescents. While participants' valued close family and school-based relationships, they were not sufficient to deter delinquency (Sander et al., 2010). Adolescents described specific qualities of favorite teachers as caring and a desire for youths to experience fresh starts and escape their bad reputation. All of the participants except one had problematic relationships with their fathers; most of the participants' fathers were unavailable due to absenteeism, incarceration, previous abusive relationships, or being emotionally unavailable. The youth reported boredom, disconnection with teachers, a mismatch of their learning with instructional style, and low-self-esteem and confidence as factors associated with juvenile delinquency and recidivism (Sander et al., 2010).

Juvenile offenders typically face multiple challenges. This population of youth typically lack the basic social and developmental skills needed for community and school success. Thus,

self-determination theory provides a guide when discussing youth challenges and skill deficiencies. The driving force of autonomy is people innately search for personal and psychological well-being to power over obstacles and things; however, research indicates youth offenders struggle with drug addiction, mental health, disabilities, lack of family support, negative life experiences, and abusive homes. Competence and relatedness play important roles in the perception of success in SDT. Competence is an individual's feeling a sense of confidence and ability to interact effectively within an environment. Consequently, youth offenders often experience school failure, often have disabilities, and lack self-esteem and confidence in their abilities to be academically and socially successful. Finally, relatedness refers to the connectedness to the world in which the individual lives; yet offenders struggle to maintain relationships with peer and teachers and other significant issues in their lives.

An overrepresentation of minority juvenile offenders who also qualify for special education services in juvenile justice facilities has been discussed in literature. Furthermore, literature describes an overabundance of offenders that are Latino/a, and there are substantial findings that these offenders are more harshly penalized than their white counterparts for the same crimes (Villarruel et al., 2002). Compounded with risk factors, these youths exit the juvenile justice system lacking basic developmental skills. In order to promote successful transitions back to the community and school settings, and reduce recidivism, youth offenders need to experience an ongoing sense of integrity and well-being. Although research provides outcomes for youths and program services, limited research exists that examines the transition process from the youth's perspective. Regardless of the extent of the services provided, if those efforts are not perceived as effective by the youth for which they are designed, it is unlikely that they will result in the desired

outcomes. Youth offenders can provide a unique perspective to the lived experiences and barriers for successful transitions from juvenile justice settings back to the community and school setting.

Available Research

Research in the area of transition from a youth's perspective is sparse and there is even less that examines gender, disability, and cultural differences. In order to conduct a thorough literature search on challenges and barriers to transitions from youth's perspectives, a systematic approach was employed by the researcher. An electronic search was conducted for studies published between 2000-2013 was conducted from the following online databases: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsychINFO, and Academic Search Complete. Next, a hand search of journals known to publish on Juvenile Justice was conducted to identify potential studies between 2000-2013 and included the following: Child Youth Care Forum, The Journal of Correctional Education, and Child Welfare. In order to capture all potential research articles, citation searches were conducted for potential inclusionary articles. The following processes allowed for locating all possible inclusionary studies. The keywords used in computer searches included: youth offender, transition, barriers, perception, disability, juvenile delinquency, incarcerated, and special education. The searches yielded a total of 129 potential articles; however, due to the multiple search indexes, several articles were duplicated.

Study inclusion. In order for a study to be included in the literature review, the study was required to meet the following criteria: (a) a qualitative or mixed method study of youth offender perceptions and/or lived experiences related to barriers to their transition from juvenile facilities back to the community, (b) youth who were presently or had been incarcerated between 12-17 years of age, (c) study was published between 2000-2013 in a peer-reviewed journal, (d) study

included youth who were or were not receiving special education services at the time of study, and (e) study included male and female participants. Studies were included if the research question addressed other aspects of transition (risk factors or needs), (f) a study was included if the length of stay for youth offenders in juvenile justice systems ranged from short-term (14 days) to long-term (unspecified amount of time). Studies that did not focus on youth perceptions and/or lived experiences of barriers to transitions were excluded. Upon identifying the included studies, a code sheet that consisted of the study's elements was developed. The elements included: participants, purpose, research questions. Additionally, Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klinger, Pugach, and Richardson (2005) provided guidelines for qualitative research; the research methods and data analysis procedures were analyzed in selected studies.

Review of studies. A total of six studies were selected for review (see Table 2.1). The participants included for synthesis were characterized as detained in a juvenile justice facility. Youth offenders' average length of stay varied among studies and ranged anywhere from 14 days to 1 year. Three of the studies included male and female participants (Baltodono et al., 2005; Fields & Abrams, 2010; Marshall, Powell, Pierce, Nolan & Fehringer, 2012) while one study (Baltodono et al., 2005) accounted for youth with disabilities. The ages of incarcerated youth ranged from 13-17 years of age, and four studies (Abrams, 2006; Baltodono et al., 2005; Dawes, 2011; Field & Abrams, 2010) included descriptive information on race and ethnicity of participants. A summary of the data for the number of participants in each study, location of juvenile justice facility, length of stay, participant criteria, age, gender and race/ethnicity is provided in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1

Review of Studies

Author	Juvenile Justice Placement	Average Length of Stay	Participant Criteria	Number of Participants	Age	Gender	Disability	Race/Ethnicity
Abrams, L. S. (2006)	Minnesota public correctional facility	9-12 months	Youth enrolled in a 6 week transition program	N= 10	M= 16.5 years old	10 male	None reported	N= 50% African American N= 20% White
Baltodono, H. M., Derrick, P., & Roberts, C. W. (2005)	Arizona juvenile detention center	14 days	Detained youth	N= 120	M= 15.6 years old	100 male 20 female	40 yes 73 no 7 unknown	N= 39% Hispanic N= 34% Caucasian N= 10% African American N= 9% Other N= 8% Native American
Dawes, G. D. (2011)	North Queensland, Australia	Not reported	Detained youth	N= 40	13-17 years old	40 male	None reported	N= 100% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
Fields, D. & Abrams, L. S. (2010)	Southern California juvenile camps	3-12 months	Detained youth within 60 days of schedule released	N= 71	M= 17.9 years old (male) M= 17.4 years old (female)	36 male 35 female	None reported	N= 78% Hispanic (male) N= 14% African American (male) N= 8% Not reporting (male)

Table 2.1: continued

								N= 74% Hispanic (female) N= 9% African American (female) N=17% not reporting (female)
Marshall, A., Powell, N., Pierce, D., Nolan, R., & Fehringer (2012)	Kentucky's A6 juvenile justice systems	Not reported	Detained youth	N=25	14-17 years old	17 male 8 female	None reported	Not reported
Unruh, D., Povenmire-Kirk, T., & Yamamoto, S. (2009).	Oregon's juvenile justice system	Long/short term closed custody (time not specified)	Detained youth and reoffenders	N= 51	Not reported	41 males 10 female	None reported	Not reported

Data sources. The primary data sources for all studies were structured interviews that utilized convenience or purposive sampling. The research question for the studies sought to describe or identify youths' perceptions of the barriers and/or risk factors to their transition back to the community. Many of the studies employed a face-to-face, semi-structured interview that posed various questions relating to transition, such as that used in the Sharpe and Litzelfelner (2004); Unruh and Bullis (2005); and Carr and Vandiver (2001) studies. The number and length of interviews conducted varied among studies ranging from 30 minutes to an hour per participant. Table 2.2 provides a summary of each study research question, sample design, survey instrument, and length of interviews.

Table 2.2

Research Methods

Author	Sample	Research Question/Purpose	Research Design	Data Collection	Survey Instrument	Length of Interview	Data Analysis
Abrams, L. S. (2006)	Convenience	How do youth offenders describe the challenges related to their transition from corrections to community?	Qualitative Field	1:1 semi-structured interview Audiotaped	Transition and reentry experiences and challenges youth either anticipated or encountered	30-90 minutes	Transcripts transcribed and imported to QSR NVIVO program for thematic analysis Analysis drawn from (1984) Miles and Huberman's four stages for qualitative data analysis Large categories broken into sub-categories inductively from transcripts Data triangulation Disconfirming evidence
Baltodono, H. M., Derrick, P., & Roberts, C.W. (2005) Table 2.2 continued	Convenience	Youth perspective on transition and barriers to successful	In-depth Analysis	Closed and open-ended questions Not reported	Questions regarding prior transition experience back to school and the community	Not reported	Bivariate analysis Finding in previous research Not reported
Dawes, G. D. (2011)	Convenience	Identify specific problems encountered by youth when	Longitudinal	1:1 semi-structured interview	Youth were asked about future plans	1 hour	Metaphor for a journey Grounded theory

Table 2.2: continued

		reentering society from juvenile justice systems		Not reported	and aspirations for life post detention		
Fields, D. & Abrams, L. S. (2010)	Convenience	What are youths perceived needs and barriers among reentry?	Cross Sectional	1:1 face-to- face structured survey	Questions related to needs and barriers in the domains of education, vocation, housing, mental health, substance abuse and legal services	30-45 minutes	Content analysis analyzed open-ended questions Response categories counted and compared across gender Data triangulation
Marshall, A., Powell, N., Pierce, D., Nolan, R., & Fehringer (2012)	Purposive	Identify and describe key components of student transition in education programs serving youth	Mixed Methods (fixed and convergent)	Focus group and 1:1 interview Audiotaped	Focus on youth understanding of their plans for transition	Not specified	Grounded theory
Unruh, D., Povenmire-Kirk, T., & Yamamoto, S. (2009).	Purposive of maximum variation	What are the perceived risk factors for adolescent involved in the juvenile justice system on their trajectory from	In-depth Analysis	1:1 semi- structured interview Audiotaped	Youth described barriers that he or she expects to face upon return to the community or	15-45 minutes	Inductive and deductive coding methods included investigator and 2 doctoral students to establish operational definitions

Table 2.2: continued

adolescence to adulthood?	while on probation in the community	Coded a set of like interviews to check for accuracy on definitions and to determine if any new codes emerged
		Data and investigator triangulation
		Peer debriefing Member check

Quality indicators. A grounded theory approach was applied to report the findings of this literature review. The method of using a grounded theory approach calls for the gathering of qualitative data, usually collected from interviews and observations. The end result of a grounded theory approach is to build upon substantive theory that emerges or is grounded in the data (Merriam, 2002). When the data is reviewed, the researcher tags the concepts and ideas that repeat, giving them a code. As the data continue to be reviewed, codes can be grouped and this eventually allows for new theories to emerge (Merriam, 2002).

Of the six studies included in the current research synthesis, five utilized interviews as the method for collecting data. Five of the studies audiotaped the interviews. Two studies applied purposive sampling to identify participants for study. The methods for collecting data aligned with the quality indicators proposed by Brantlinger et al. (2005) for qualitative research: appropriate participants are selected purposefully, interview questions are sufficient for exploring domains of interest, and adequate mechanisms are used to record and transcribe interviews. A summary of the studies that employed a quality indicator for data collection is listed in Table 2.2

Furthermore, Brantlinger et al. (2005) provided a list of practices that are commonly used to indicate that audiences can trust the credibility of research and the analytic procedures used to report findings. Triangulation is the search for convergence of evidence from multiple and varied data sources such as data, investigator, theory, and methodological triangulation. Five of the studies examined used at least one triangulation method in order to interpret their results. Two studies utilized disconfirming evidence. That is, after the preliminary themes were identified, the researchers searched for evidence that were

inconsistent with their preliminary themes. Four of the studies involved collaborative work in designing the study or concurring about the conclusions. Two studies included in the research did not report a quality indicator or a credibility measure for data collection and analysis. While there are other credibility measures proposed by Brantlinger et al. (2005), the described measures name a few of those found in the studies for synthesis. However, caution is advised if a study did not report an indicator and/or a credibility measure. A summary of the studies that employed a credibility measure for data analysis is listed in Table 2.2.

SDT constructs

In reference to the studies being discussed, themes and sub-themes were identified from the data that had been collected. Within each sub-theme, concepts allowed SDT constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness to inform an understanding of youths perceived challenges to transition from juvenile justice facilities back to the community and the barriers to school success to be categorized as follows: peer and family influences, educational and community influences, self-concept and confidence, and environment.

Family and peer influences/autonomy. An undeniable aspect of the life of youth is the relationship that occurs between them and the people that orbit their lives. This provides the social constructs and ideas that influence their worldview. Two studies (Abrams, 2006; Dawes, 2011) identified peer and family influences as a barrier to youth offenders' successful transition back to the community and school setting. Unruh, Povenmire-Kirk and Yamamoto (2009) described the relationship between family and peers, and found 87% of youth recognized peers as a potential barrier leading to continued involvement with gangs,

antisocial behavior and drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, youth voiced a strong need to have a stable place to live to support positive development. Youth stated, lacking this stable environment, they would return to old peer groups and negative behaviors and activities (Unruh et al., 2009, p. 212).

Abrams (2006) found nearly all of the youth accurately predicted that confronting old friends and influences would be the most difficult part of their transition. They described gangs, friends who use drugs, and neighborhoods as compromising their transition experience. Another finding from their study was at least half of the youth had family members who were involved in gangs, or criminal activity. Youth whose families were criminally involved felt that they could not separate themselves from their family members who comprised their primary social networks (Abrams, 2006). Similarly, Dawes' (2011) findings revealed that breaking the cycle of crime was more difficult when the youth re-established links with criminal peers or other family members who already had interactions with the criminal justice system. In fact, chances of youth re-offending increased the risk 30% when a family member had a criminal conviction.

Unruh et al. (2009) found 37% of youth perceived the lack of emotional support as detrimental to their success during the adolescent development process. Youth identified their families as potential barriers when family members were involved in gangs, drugs, alcohol, violence or the adult criminal justice system. One youth reported what he thought he would need from his family: "to give you the love and attention that you need along with opportunities and the security" (Unruh et al., 2009).

Educational and community experiences/relatedness. Along with family and peer influences, Baltodano et al. (2005) asked participants who had been previously detained if they experienced difficulty returning to school upon their previous release. Fifty-two percent of youth in this study indicated they experienced difficulties making the transition to school. Students reported their difficulties as follows: they had missed too much work for them to feasibly make up, schools would not accept them back or were too structured, and drug use hindered their transition back to school (Baltodano et al., 2005). Dawes (2011) found most of the youth reported a desire to continue with their education and engage in programs that would prepare them for life after their return to their communities. However, many youth encountered barriers when attempting to access schools that they had previously attended. For example, there were a number of accounts where youth encountered negative reactions from school principals and teachers when they attempted to re-enroll. One student reported being told on his first day by the principal that he was no longer welcome because of his previous history, which was comprised of high levels of absenteeism and resistant behaviors toward teachers and other students (Dawes, 2011).

Fields and Abrams (2010) reported youth had little or no confidence about their skills in math and 72% anticipated personal motivation, negative influence of friends, and academic readiness as barriers for school success. Marshall et al. (2012) reported that a negative school culture of youth offenders existed in the schools where youth re-entered contributed as significant barrier to school success. Unruh et al. (2009) found that 76% of participants cited poor decision-making as a barrier to transition.

Self-concept and confidence/competence. A majority of youth express concern with their competence in academic ability and skills to locate employment. Dawes (2011) found 24 interviewees reported that the greatest challenge to their successful reentry was that they had been singled out and stigmatized due to their criminal histories. For example, one youth stated he had been stopped by the police on the street without being given an explanation and questioned about any alleged involvement in other crimes. Marshall et al. (2012) found youth categorized themselves or other youth negatively, using terms such as a probation violator, drug user, troublemaker, and drop out.

Abrams (2006) concluded that mentally preparing for transition as an anticipated challenge for youth, such as learning to cope with freedom and building a strong sense of resolve. Coping with freedom referred to the mental preparation needed to manage being unsupervised, yet still avoiding illegal activities. Another finding from their study indicated youth needed to build a strong sense of resolve and to retain what they had learned in corrections in the face of criminal temptations.

Fields and Abrams (2010) indicated 60% of the youth they studied stated having a criminal record might hinder their job prospects. Unruh et al. (2009) reported employment themes of a cross section of domains related to relationship dynamics, self, and the content of the community in which the youth would reside. A few youths, less than 10% of respondents, stated barriers to employment consisted of their lack of ability to know how to find and maintain a job. Additionally, while concerned with their job skills, youth were also concerned with the negative stigma of being involved in the juvenile justice system and with their future employment prospects (Unruh et al., 2009).

Environment/autonomy. The struggle to locate stable environments post release and overcome drug addiction highlights that many youths feel a lack of control of their lives. Abrams (2006) found that youth who transitioned and then reoffended, cited unanticipated problems with instability of living situations, transportation, and pressure to provide for their own children. A few youths experienced disruption in their living situations, and they could not afford to live on their own. Fields and Abrams (2010) indicated that youth were asked if they had any concerns they had about their housing situation upon their release. Seventeen of the 71 youth answered yes, and of this group, a significantly higher percentage of females expressed concerns about their plans. Dawes (2011) reported that returning to unsatisfactory home environments contributed to the reality that 53% of this group reoffended. For these individuals, there was not a family member with whom to reconnect with upon their release from detention. Other youth made the decision not to return home to their families due to their perceived risk associated with their personal safety (Dawes, 2011).

Dawes (2011) reported a lack of involvement in activities such as sports or recreation after returning to their communities. These problems were more amplified in smaller communities, due to the limited availability of support agencies or opportunities to assist youth in reengaging with educational, vocational, and employment opportunities. Unruh et al. (2009) found that 51% of youth reported access to drugs in their community as a barrier to successful community adjustment. Additionally, 47% indicated a need for more accessible, healthy, leisure activities.

Summary

With an understanding of the research and studies that contributed to the development of SDT presented at the beginning of the chapter, one can gain a better understanding of the lenses through which the current study is observed. A theme that reaches across all studies involving youth indicates school success as a perceived barrier for youth offenders. Another important finding to emerge as a perceived barrier to transition was the influence of peers and family. Understanding SDT's constructs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness can inform an understanding of youth offenders' perceived challenges to transition from juvenile justice facilities back to the community. Furthermore, identifying the types of disabilities, and the extent to which the three psychological needs defined by SDT are relevant. A gap exists within the literature for Hispanic female youth offenders with disabilities. The results of this literature review suggest additional research should continue to examine the perceived barriers to school success and the transition from juvenile justice facilities back to the community and school settings between gender, disability, and cultural differences. Understanding the impact of youth experiences and self-realization provides empowerment with the ultimate goal to promote a level playing field for recently adjudicated youth so that they may have the same opportunities as other students. For progress to be made, further research will have to delve into these populations to provide additional insight that will aid in their journey toward a more stable life.

Chapter 3

This chapter describes the research methodology and design used for the current study. Studies to date focus primarily on outcomes of reentry and provide valuable quantitative data; however, little is known about youth's own perceptions of reentry needs and the various challenges involved. Using self-determination theory (SDT) as a theoretical lens, this research study emphasized the lived educational experiences of youth and their views on transition. Study participants can provide a unique perspective as firsthand observers by offering a different voice and interpretation of their experiences of the anticipated challenges and barriers they face for returning to the school system.

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of middle school Hispanic females with disabilities placed in a residential treatment center (RTC) and their previous educational experiences. The study also sought to identify the challenges and barriers to school success for youth as they prepare to transition from a RTC back to a school setting. The study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about academic experiences for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?
2. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about teacher interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?

3. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about peer interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?

Because SDT is the lens through which this study is conducted, the constructs examined in this study will include autonomy, competence and relatedness. SDT maintains that certain evolved psychological needs must be satisfied if individuals are to develop to their fullest potential (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008). Furthermore, SDT presumes people innately search for personal and psychological well-being and growth. That is, people have a set of physiological needs that must be met if individuals are to develop to their fullest potential. These constructs served to explain the anticipated challenges and barriers to academic experiences, teacher interactions, and peer influences for Hispanic females with disabilities.

Participants

Participants in this study were selected utilizing purposive criterion and homogenous sampling. In qualitative research, purposeful criterion sampling allows for participants to be selected based on characteristics of a sample that is specific to the needs of the topic under study (Chilisa, 2012). The selection of participants consisted of the following criteria: (a) female, (b) identified as Hispanic, (c) between the ages of 12 and 17 years, (d) received special education services for a learning and/or emotional disability, and (e) placed in a RTC. Homogenous sampling ensured selected participants were knowledgeable in their experiences in order for the researcher to understand and describe the participant group in

depth (Chilisa, 2012). The criteria set established that participants who were selected had knowledge of their educational experiences.

Setting. The following criteria were applied to site selection. First, the site was a non-profit, residential treatment center in, South Central Texas, placements were court mandated. This arrangement allowed youth to retain ties to the community while under judicial supervision. The school was a charter school in an urban area that provided educational services specifically to students residing in this center and served a maximum of 40 females between the ages of 7 and 21. These youth had been adjudicated for offenses ranging from misdemeanor drug charges and theft to felony assault. Participants were court ordered into this facility by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS). This placement is often chosen for youth who are in need of 24-hour, therapeutic care at the specialized or intense level due to emotional/behavioral needs. At the time of the study, the charter school served 37 students in grades 6-12. Table 3.1 below shows the demographic data of the school population.

Table 3.1

School Population Demographics

Total Enrollment	Economically Disadvantaged	Special Education	Asian	African American	Hispanic	White	Two or More Races
37	100%	57%	.02%	16%	32%	43%	.05%

The school consisted of three content area teachers and two elective/special education teachers. Teachers typically served between 6-10 students in each class period and an

instructional aide supported each classroom. Table 3.2 provides the demographic data for the teachers.

Table 3.2

Teacher Demographics

Teacher	Ethnicity	Gender	Years of Experience	Courses Taught
Mr. W	White	Male	17	Social Studies, Science & PE
Ms. L	African-American	Female	8	ELA, Social Studies
Mr. C	Hispanic	Male	10	Math
Ms. F	White	Female	8	Special Education, Art
Ms. C	Hispanic	Female	6	Special Education, Electives

Sample. Participants were Hispanic females between the ages of 12 and 17 years, who were receiving special education services for an emotional and/or learning disability. Additionally, youth were court-ordered to a RTC by a Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TFDPS) judge due to an intense emotional/behavioral need. The participants' names (pseudonyms), ages, grade, disability category and legal status are compiled in Table 3.3. It should also be noted that each of the participants would be considered as White-Hispanic English speakers of average intelligence.

Table 3.3

Participants Demographic Information

Name	Age	Grade	Disability	Legal Status
Antonia	14	8	LD/ED	PMC
Katy	14	8	ED	PMC
Jackie	14	8	LD/ED	PMC
Maddie	14	8	LD/ED	TMC
Alyssa	13	7	ED	PMC
Marie	14	8	ED	PMC

Note. LD = Learning Disability; ED = Emotional Disturbance; PMC = Permanent Managing Conservatorship; TMC = Temporary Managing Conservatorship.

Data Collection Methods

Three methods of data collection were used in this study. The use of triangulation can allowed for multiple data sources to bear on a single point (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The three data sources included in-depth semi-structured interviews, a survey, and document analysis.

Interviews. The primary method used to obtain information from participants was interviews. Semi-structured interviews ensured that the researcher collects similar types of data from all informants (Chilisa, 2012). The purpose of the interview was to gain an understanding of how youth perceived their past educational experiences in the form of a narrative. Additionally, the interviews allowed for a deeper understanding of the youths' perceptions of their upcoming transition back into a school setting as it related to

expectations of academic experiences, teacher interactions, and peer influences. Interviews were chosen because they are the “best technique to use when conducting intensive case studies of a few selected individuals” (Merriam, 1998, p.72). The in-depth interview allowed access to the participant’s personal feelings and captured “... the deep meaning of an experience in the participants’ own words” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 93). Moreover, interviews can be an essential source of case study evidence because they give the researcher access to what people perceive, how they interpret these perceptions, and how events affect their thoughts and feelings (Weiss, 1994).

Interview guide. An interview guide was created by the researcher. An interview guide is an outline of topics and questions to be covered during an interview and assists the interviewer during the questioning process. The interview guide consisted of 28 questions that solicited information about the participants past, current, and anticipated thoughts and feelings about academic and school experiences. The interview questions also included past, current, and anticipated thoughts and feelings regarding teachers and peer interactions. Probes were added to solicit responses if a participant was reluctant or needed assistance with elaborating on a response. For example:

“Do you find learning math easy or difficult to learn? (Probes: Reading? Writing? Why? Can you give an example of a time when you found math, reading, writing easy to learn? Difficult to learn? Why do you think it was hard or easy?)”

Each interview question was placed in a matrix to match its corresponding research question. The questions addressed the self-determination constructs by relaying data that deal with autonomy, competence and relatedness. Each question was designed to gain

insight to each participants' experiences and expectations, thereby allowing the researcher to identify repeating codes and classify the appropriate themes. The interview guide is found in Appendix A.

Interview pilot. For this study, the researcher piloted the interview with two participants who shared characteristics similar to the participants in the main study. The use of pilot interviews helped in understanding oneself as a researcher and aids in finding ways to eliminate barriers such as resistance to recordings and mistrust of the interviewer's agenda (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The researcher interviewed the pilot participants for approximately 45 minutes, using questions found in the interview guide. All questions were answered by the pilot participants with minimal probing required. After listening to the interviews, the researcher noted several things: the interviewer finished sentences on several responses which could influence participant responses. Additionally, the researcher needed to be more mindful of the pacing of the interview questions and allow the interviewee to elaborate upon their response. Last, there were several occurrences where the interviewee looked at the recorder. The researcher noted that in the future, the researcher would need to put the recorder aside so as not to potentially intimidate the participants. Piloting the interview guide allowed the researcher to hear the interview questions aloud with participants and note how her presence, the format of the interview, time, and equipment could possibly influence the responses.

Survey. A second data collection used tool was a survey. The scale developed for the current study was adapted from a scale used in a study conducted by Hawkins and Novy (2011). These researchers adapted their scale from the *Basic Psychological Needs at Work*

Scale. That scale was originally designed to measure the extent to which competence, relatedness, and autonomy are met in specific and general settings, such as a work setting. That scale has been used by many self-determination theory researchers such as Deci et al., (2001), Illardi, Leone, Kasser and Ryan (1993), and Kasser, Davey and Ryan (1992). For their study, Hawkins and Novy (2011), modified the 30-question, Likert-type survey to identify the extent to which the participants felt autonomy, confidence, and relatedness were met as it pertained to both a school and social setting. Adapted with permission by Novy, the researcher took the Hawkins and Novy scale and adjusted survey questions to fit the needs of the current study. The researcher used 22 question/statements that would allow participants to rate on a Likert-type scale. Participants were asked to reflect on school experiences and how they think they “will do” once they transition to a school setting. The survey identifies to what extent autonomy, competence, and relatedness are being met as it pertains to academics and teacher and peer interactions.

Survey scale. The scale was first modified and then placed in a matrix to match with its corresponding research question. The researcher then sent the scale to field experts to seek input with analyzing the survey questions by asking them to rank and provide comments/feedback on questions. The experts were asked to review the survey items, to keep research questions in mind, and to use a scale of 1 (Yes), 2 (somewhat), and 3 (No) to whether or not the survey item related to at least one of the research questions. A total of six field experts responded to survey. Field experts consisted of five individuals working within the Texas Department of Juvenile Justice Department and one university researcher in the area of juvenile justice. Of the 22 survey items presented, the researcher did not

eliminate any items from the survey. This determination was based on the feedback received. If a survey item received a 66.6% of 1 (yes) or 66.6% 1 (yes) and 2 (somewhat) combined, the researcher considered that item to be related to a research question. All items met the criteria. Table 3.4 provides the survey items and inclusion determination.

Table 3.4

Inclusion Determination

Statement		Yes	Somewhat	No
1.	At school, I will get a chance to show how much I know.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
2.	It will be easy for me to learn new things in school.	66.6%	0%	33%
3.	I will meet the challenges of doing well in school.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
4.	Learning will come easy to me.	66.6%	0%	33%
5.	My grades will be good in school.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
6.	I will be academically ready to go back to school.	66.6%	0%	33%
7.	I will have the academic skills to do well in school.	50%	16.6%	33%
8.	I will enjoy going to school.	66.6%	0%	33%
9.	Teachers will treat me with respect.	66.6%	0%	33%
10.	Teachers will give me choices about how to do my school work.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
11.	Teachers will describe my behavior as good in school.	66.6%	0%	33%
12.	My feelings will count in school.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
13.	My teachers will give me choices.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
14.	I will be respected and cared about by my teachers in school.	66.6%	0%	33%

Table 3.4: continued

15.	There will be a teacher or teachers that can help me in school.	66.6%	33%	0%
16.	I will feel welcomed at school by my teachers.	66.6%	0%	33%
17.	Outside of school, my friends will support me.	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%
18.	My friends will want me to do well in school.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
19.	I will be able to rely on my friends for support.	83%	16.6%	0%
20.	I will be able to rely on my friends to stay out of trouble.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
21.	I will make good decisions when I am with my friends.	66.6%	16.6%	16.6%
22.	I will choose friends who make good decisions.	66.6%	0%	33%

Survey pilot. The survey was then piloted with ten participants who shared similar characteristics to the students in the study. A Cronsbach's alpha test was used to determine how closely survey items related to each other. For this pilot survey, Cronsbach's alpha was .95 indicating a high internal consistency. This suggested that the survey items held construct validity and measured what they intended. The goal of the survey was to validate and triangulate data collected from interviews.

Document analysis. The last data collection method included was a document analysis. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating documents that require examination and interpretation in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, document analysis is particularly applied in qualitative case studies to produce a rich

description of a single phenomena (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). The document analysis developed, sought out information regarding the participants current individualized education program (IEP) and included information about the student's area of eligibility, and present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP) in reading, writing and mathematics. Also included were the educational services, related services and behavior intervention plan (BIP). Specific information was gathered within the PLAAFP to include documented strengths, areas of need, impact of disability and accommodations or modifications. Additionally, space was provided to review the full individualized evaluation (FIE) and to record the grade student was first identified for special education services. See Appendix B for a copy of the IEP/FIE data collection form.

A second data analysis collection form was developed to review the RTC's admission assessment. The form was organized into eight reporting areas that were included in the participants admission assessment along with the researcher-assigned participant identification number, pseudonym, age, and grade. The first reporting area provided general information that included the date of student admission, the child's legal status, and circumstances that led to the child's referral to RTC placement. The next reporting area provided social information that detailed the child's criminal history and high-risk behaviors that pose a risk to self or others (risk indicators). Information regarding family provided a description of home environment and family functioning, followed by educational information such as the student's current educational level and previous school problems. Another reporting category included psychological information that documented the participant's developmental history, history of abuse and neglect, and known substance

abuse history. The final reporting area covered the outcome/goal and provided the RTC's anticipated length of stay for the participant. See appendix C for a copy of the admission assessment data collection form.

All document reviews were completed by hand and the researcher examined and analyzed the documents to determine if information in the IEP/FIE and admission assessments reflected information shared in interviews and survey in order to triangulate data. Bowen (2009) stated document analysis is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods as a means of triangulation and can verify and corroborate findings from other data sources. For example:

“Do you find learning math easy or difficult?”

This is a sample interview question that asked participants to reflect on their academic experiences. One component of the document analysis was to review present levels of functioning and performance, and previous academic grades. The evidence from this document analysis provided the means to either contradict or corroborate data collected. If the documentary evidence was contradictory rather than corroboratory, the researcher was expected to investigate further; however where there is convergence from different sources, readers of the research can place greater confidence of the findings (Bowen, 2009).

Research Design

In educational research, experimental designs are the predominate method of inquiry (Anzul, Evans, King & Tellier-Robinson, 2001; Brantlinger et al., 2005). Quantitative research, particularly randomized controlled trials, are the gold standard in research design. However, this type of research design is not always feasible in real-world settings, nor does

it capture descriptive data or phenomenological contributions to processes or events in question. Research employing quantitative methods is typically done in a controlled setting that bears little resemblance to the complexities and continual changing nature of real life (Anzul et al., 2001). Conversely, qualitative research is usually enacted in a naturalistic setting, with the idea that individuals and their interactions socially construct meaning (Brantlinger et al., 2005). Qualitative researchers use theoretical lenses in their research to provide them with an overall orienting lens to shape the types of questions asked and provide for a framework for how data are collected and analyzed (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Qualitative methodologies have increasingly become accepted modes of inquiry for producing science-based evidence that can inform policy and practice (Anzul et al., 2001; Brantlinger et al., 2005; Merriam, 2002). Research employing qualitative methods encompasses a systematic approach to understanding qualities or the essential nature of a phenomenon within a particular context (Merriam, 2002). Information from qualitative studies can produce descriptive or procedural knowledge, can yield multifaceted findings, and can lead to a deeper understanding of individuals (Azul et al., 2001; Brantlinger et al., 2005). Therefore, descriptive information from qualitative studies has the potential to invite readers to enter into and experience the personal worlds of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The literature overwhelmingly advocates for transitional services to help juveniles successfully reintegrate (Fields & Abrams, 2010). Furthermore, studies to date focus primarily on outcomes of reentry services. However, there is a gap in terms of understanding Hispanic female youth with disabilities, and their own perception of their reentry needs and

the various challenges involved. For this reason, using SDT as theoretical lens to examine issues of race, gender, and disabilities while employing a qualitative research method provides an opportunity for these youths to describe their previous educational experiences and express their anticipated transition back to the school setting. Thus, qualitative research can be a valuable method to obtain data related to reentry perceptions to guide transition services, receiving schools, and educators who will serve these youth upon their release.

For the purpose of this study, the qualitative research design was studies of multiple cases. Brantlinger et al. (2005) described case studies as the exploration of a bounded system such as groups, individuals, settings, events, phenomenon, or process. The case under study for this research included, middle school, Hispanic females with disabilities who were housed in a RTC. Depending on the focus, case studies can either be exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory in nature (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 1994). Exploratory case studies mainly focus on “what” questions with the goal of developing pertinent hypotheses and propositions for further inquiry (Yin, 1994). Given the research questions posed, the “what” provides a rationale to conduct exploratory multiple case study, wherein an individual is being studied and becomes the primary unit of analysis. In order to narrow the relevant information to be collected from each individual, propositions have been identified prior to data collection (Yin, 1994). The propositions for studying middle school, Hispanic females with disabilities included descriptive information regarding previous educational experiences, anticipated expectations of academic experiences, anticipated teacher interactions and peer influences as these youth transition back into a school setting.

There are strengths and limitations to using a multiple case studies research design. A significant strength in case studies involves the in-depth analysis within a real-life context (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 1994). An additional benefit to multiple case studies is that the audience can learn through various encounters the researcher details within their narrative and unique story (Stake, 1995). That is, case studies can provide detailed information about a specific context based on an individual's lived experience in his or her own words. With the fact that these experiences are anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon (Yin, 1994).

With case study research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data procedures, collection, and analysis. With regard to limitations using multiple case studies, there is the concern about the credibility of the study. This concern can occur for several reasons, including whether the case investigator is not detailed in the procedures, resulting in evidence that can be sloppy and allow equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusion (Yin, 1994). A second concern regarding case studies is they provide little basis for generalization (Merriam, 2002). This issue of generalization can be addressed by ensuring method and analytic procedures are systematic and clearly stated to minimize the errors and biases in a study. In case studies, the researcher's goal is to expand and generalize theories by replicating analytic procedures to study phenomenon (Yin, 1994). Yet, another issue found in case study research is the amount of time it takes to complete, which can result in massive and unreliable documents (Merriam, 2002; Yin, 1994).

The researcher chose this methodology to give voice to middle school Hispanic females with disabilities regarding their anticipated expectations to their transition back to the school setting. These personal experiences had potential to provide schools, teachers and interventionists with pertinent information to better train, receive and plan for this population of youth. Researchers have come to a general consensus that a comprehensive continuum of gender specific, gender responsive, culturally competent, and developmentally appropriate prevention and intervention services needs to be developed and tailored to address the distinct needs of adolescent female offenders (Welch, Roberts-Lewis & Parker, 2009). The researcher aspired to address the specific needs of this population through the narratives of the participants. Furthermore, the researcher hoped this study could provide a foundation for deeper and more meaningful insight into the lives of those interviewed.

Researcher as Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher's perceptions of reality and what counts as knowledge can have an impact on the way research questions are conceived (Chilisa, 2012). Thus, qualitative research is influenced by the researcher's credibility. According to Patton (1990), credibility refers to the accuracy with which the researcher is able to represent the perceptions of the participants, which is inherently impacted by the researcher's personal background. This includes research approaches, data-gathering instruments, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of research findings.

As a special education teacher and student, the researcher brought to this study sets of values, beliefs, and experiences that may have influenced data collection, analysis, and interpretation and the dissemination of research findings. As a Hispanic female, the

researcher was considered an insider. The impact of insider and outsider research in qualitative research refers to researchers who conduct research with populations to which they are members, share identities, language, and experiential base (Asselin, 2003; Kanuha, 2000). It is not easy to differentiate what makes a researcher an outsider. The researcher was aware of the commonalities they shared with those they observed; however, it is believed that their research methods were as unbiased as possible and was guided by the quality indicators outlined in this study. Asselin (2003) suggested it is best for the insider researcher to gather data with her or his “eyes open,” but assuming that she or he knows nothing about the phenomenon being studied. Throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation, a journal was kept to document the researcher’s experiences in an attempt to record deficit thinking, expose pitfalls, and provide transparency. The purpose for the journal was to reflect and capture how these biases may have influenced the process by which the researcher generated and interpreted results.

The researcher’s personal experiences included growing up with her father, mother and older brother in an urban neighborhood area with a lower socioeconomic population. She grew up listening to her parents speak Spanish, while she and her brother responded in English. Her parents were very adamant that she and her brother spoke English to prevent them from being placed in English as Second Language (ESL) classes. The researcher’s parents were hard workers and instilled in her a sense that she could make her life better with education. However, due to struggles she encountered when she was a youth which included various forms of abuse, she became involved in drugs, found herself in legal trouble, and quit school in the 11th grade. These past experiences contribute to the researcher's insider

status, and it is the researchers hope to reflect each participant's voice and narrative that the researcher shares. With the help of some very important people in her life she was able to attend a community college, graduate from a 4-year university, and earn a master's degree. Her life experiences as a high school dropout, growing up in a lower-socioeconomic environment, and her involvement in the justice system have shaped her beliefs and experiences as an educator.

As a special education teacher, she has 20 years of experience teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Although, she did not receive special education services, she was frequently removed from the general education classrooms for misbehavior due to issues that were going on in her personal life. Those past experiences have shaped her interactions with student and parents and particularly those individuals with whom she shares a similar background. The empathy she feels for students who are experiencing emotional and behavior difficulties drives her personally and the knowledge that the use of certain behavioral and emotional interventions can be paramount to ensuring that students gain behavior and academic success. She knows that without intervention the outcomes for these students can be extremely bleak. The researcher's personal encounters with the criminal justice system and experiences she has shared with family members and friends have also formed her beliefs on how institutional structures can be vital in making positive changes in the lives of the youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

Data Collection Procedures

Study approval. The researcher proposed the study topic and the dissertation committee accepted the proposal. The researcher then submitted an application to University

Institutional Review Board (UIRB) at The University of Texas along with the necessary research proposal, consent forms, interview guide, and survey for review. Once UIRB approved the study, the researcher then contacted the RTC and discussed the study's purpose and goals with the administrator who oversees research projects. The researcher then completed a written request that described the research project, identified the data elements to be requested, and the time frame for data collection. Additionally, the written request included the research proposal, the methodology to support data elements requested and provided proof of full IRB approval. Upon being approved by the RTC, and all necessary permission obtained, the researcher sought out the assistance of the campus administrator over external research in soliciting potential participants to identify students who fit the study's criteria. The researcher also met with the residential education director to discuss the study and the extent of the research being conducted.

Participant recruitment. The campus administrator identified a total of 8 potential participants that met the researcher's criteria for the study. A list of names with contact information and the child's legal status were then provided to the researcher. If it was determined that a participant was in temporary managing conservatorship (TMC) or permanent managing conservatorship (PMC), the educational decision-maker or surrogate parent was sought out to seek permission. IRB-approved letters were sent to parents/guardians of potential participants explaining the purpose of research and to request permission.

Consent. The consent form was written in Spanish and English so that both languages were readily accessible to both parents/guardian to meet language needs. The

researcher provided information about the study to each potential participant explaining that participation in the study would be at the youth's discretion. Also included was a timeline of activities, how data would be collected, and that audio recording devices would be used during interviews and follow-up interviews. If parent/guardian and participant agreed to participate, they both signed the form and returned it to the campus administrator at the RTC. During the study, two participants were removed from the study before phase I, after consent had been obtained because they were withdrawn from the school. A week after consent letters were sent, the researcher called parent/guardians to verify if letters had been received and if they had any questions or concerns for the researcher. After receiving signed parent/guardian consent forms, the researcher met with the campus administrator to review the signed consent forms and to set up individual meetings with each participant.

Phase I. The researcher then established a face-to-face contact with participants. At this time, the researcher provided further details about the study and answered questions. Additionally, the researcher explained orally, as well as in writing, that they were under no obligation to join the study, participation was voluntary, and they could decide not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Finally, the researcher explained that participants would not receive any type of payment for participating in the study. All participants were provided with a signed copy of their assent for their records.

The initial interview was tentatively scheduled for 60 minutes. The purpose of this introductory meeting was to establish the research partnership in which the researcher and respondent get to know each other, get a sense of the rhythm in the exchange, and establish the outlines of the respondent's story (Weiss, 1994). The researcher met with the six

participants a total of four times. Weiss (1994) stated that additional contact increases rapport between the interviewer and the person being interviewed. Furthermore, this also reinforces the research procedure itself by allowing participants to become more comfortable and willing to communicate their experiences. The initial interview focused on how the researcher could best establish a relationship with the interviewee. The researcher shared her personal and professional timeline and goals as it related to the current study, provided an overview of future interview processes, and solicited any questions the participants may have had of the researcher and the research procedure.

Initial researcher/participant meeting, subsequent interviews and all study activities were held in a private office located on the school campus. The campus administrator identified the room as a secure location that would protect the privacy of the participants. Each of the participants were assigned a personal identification number and a pseudonym to protect privacy and confidentiality of data. All recorded interviews were downloaded and stored on a secure server. The researcher's interview notes were kept in a locked cabinet and all electronic files were kept on a password protected computer on an encrypted hard drive. All recordings, surveys, interview notes, and any electronic communication were shredded and destroyed once results have been analyzed and written for publication.

Phase II. The second interview was scheduled one week after the initial meeting and was anticipated to last 60-90 minutes. For the second interview, the goal of the researcher was to collect a majority of the data from the interview guide questions. During the scheduled interview, the researcher observed each participant for fatigue, restlessness, or ambivalence during the interview. During the interview, the researcher periodically asked participants if

they needed a break or would like to discontinue the interview. In addition, the researcher monitored the participant behaviors, for example if responses became incoherent or the respondent seemed unwilling to answer. Upon completing the interviews, recorded information was transcribed by the researcher. The researcher reviewed the transcriptions along with notes taken during the interview to check for the researcher's accuracy of the participant's observations, participation and behaviors during interviews.

Phase III. The third meeting consisted of a participant-interviewer conversation that allowed the researcher an opportunity to clarify any questions and was scheduled to last 60 minutes. A member check was conducted with participants in which the researcher shared initial findings and codes that began to emerge. The researcher shared specified quotes to check if the interpretation of participants' narratives were accurately captured from their perspective. Member checks allowed the researcher to take tentative findings back to participants to ensure their experience and perceptions were accurately captured (Merriam 2002). It also allowed the researcher to engage in a dialogue for participants to comment, provide feedback or clarification if needed. Likewise, the meeting also allowed for the participants to reflect upon their experiences.

Phase IV. The final meeting was scheduled to last 30 minutes. At the final meeting, the researcher met with participants and they were given the survey that could be completed independently or read aloud by the researcher, if needed. The final meeting also served as a closure to the study; the researcher was able to thank the participants for sharing their experiences and information.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis is an interpretive act that begins early in the research and brings meaning to raw data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Furthermore, Marshall and Rossman (2011) defined data analysis as an ongoing process that provides strategies for discerning, examining, comparing and contrasting, and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes. This inductive process builds from the data and broad themes to a generalized model or theory (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Wolcott (1994) described analysis as a set of distinctive activities (i.e., description, analysis, and interpretation) that often do not follow a linear progression. This process allows the researcher to cycle back and forth between thinking about collected data and generating new strategies that can enhance data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Miles et al., 2014). Thus, data analysis can be divided into two phases: transcript preparation and interview coding.

Transcript preparation involved the researcher processing and organizing the data in order to prepare for analysis. White (1980) suggested that during the initial interview, field notes should be added to gather information on context, nonverbal cues, and situational background. Upon completing a recorded interview, the researcher listened to the interviews and added additional notes to summarize the interview and capture the researcher's impression. All field notes and taped interviews were transcribed by the researcher and organized according to individual interview. This allowed the researcher to consistently immerse and engage back and forth with the data.

With regard to interview coding, Saldana (2013) stated the nature of a central question and related research questions will influence the specific coding choices a researcher will make. Additionally, Marshall & Rossman (2011) suggested that researchers should use preliminary research questions and the related literature to develop guidelines by which data could initially be coded. For this reason, the researcher employed the process suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1988), which is a breakdown of qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examined them, and compared them for similarities and differences and began with initial coding. In order to accomplish first cycle coding the researcher coded line-by-line words or short phrases from the actual language found in the interview transcripts. The researcher accomplished first cycle coding by taking each transcribed interview and placing short words/phrases in quotation marks. This process was applied to all interviews. After initial coding, the process of second coding began.

Second cycle coding involves organizing and condensing the vast array of initial details to develop categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from first cycle codes (Saldana, 2013). A theme that emerged across all participants' interviews was anticipating "TEACHER INTERACTIONS" which could be related to several different phenomena, describing a past interaction, anticipating a future interaction, a positive teacher attribute or negative teacher attribute. As the researcher made notes of themes, data-chunking was simultaneously applied. Data chunking allowed for data reduction by retrieving meaningful material to assemble data that goes together and condenses the bulk of data into units which are readily available for analyzation (Miles et al., 2014).

Like first cycle coding, depending on the study, second cycle methods can entail a variety of strategies. Therefore, to ensure the researcher captured the pattern of codes adequately, a map was developed to display the codes that led to themes. Mapping helps to visually display so the researcher can see how components are interconnected. The researcher again reviewed interviewee notes, second cycle coding transcription, and charted notable phrases/words on the map by hand. The researcher was able to qualify pattern codes which the conditions under which is holds are specified (Miles et al., 2014). Table 3.5 below shows the measures and analysis for each research question posed for the current study.

Table 3.5

Measures

Research Question	Measure(s)	Data Analysis
What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about academic experiences for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in short-term residential community correctional juvenile justice centers transitioning back into a school setting?	Interview survey document analysis	Employ initial coding, second cycle coding and mapping which allows the breaking down of qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences Survey results will be analyzed using Cronbach's alpha test Synthesize the data gained from student IEP school records, and previous arrest records

Table 3.5: continued

What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about teacher's interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in short-term residential community juvenile justice centers transitioning back into a school setting?	Interview survey document analysis	Employ initial coding, second cycle coding and mapping which allows the breaking down of qualitative data into discrete parts, closely examining them, and comparing them for similarities and differences
What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about peer influences for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a short-term residential community juvenile justice centers transitioning back into a school setting?	Interview	Survey results will be analyzed using Cronbach's alpha test Synthesize the data gained from student IEP school records, and previous arrest records

During the process of data analysis, the researcher was immersed in the data that was provided by the responses of the participants in both the interview and survey questions. Much time went into cross-analyzing the data in the response sources, as well as the documents that accompanied the participants. The level of immersion in the data being what it was, the researcher was confident that the information provided within this study is as accurate as she could possibly make it. As the study continued, the researcher began to get to know the participants on several levels which included very personal stories that were not common information to just anyone with whom the girls interacted. The researcher began to realize that this was an opportunity for these stories to be told. The process of the interview

would allow for the girls to examine and tell their story to an interested audience; the survey allowed for a closer examination of their own situation removed from that audience; and the documents that were a part of each case allowed for an outside perspective on their circumstances. The data provided by the interview, survey and document analysis began to expose a narrative in which these girls lived and as the researcher continued to analyze the data, the researcher became aware of the responsibility with which this data was imbued.

Trustworthiness

One concern in qualitative research deals with the trustworthiness or confidence that researchers place in the procedures used in the data gathering, the data collected, the interpretation, findings and conclusions (Chilisa, 2012). This requires the researcher to be aware of possible threats to credibility, while simultaneously employing procedures and strategies to ensure the results are valid and can be trusted. Credibility refers to the use of rigor in the research process and the ability of the researcher to identify and describe, as adequately as possible, the “truth value” of the subjects under study (Chilisa; 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 1990). For this study, the researcher implemented strategies to establish a sound and credible study. Because the participants were in a RTC, they were considered a vulnerable population. The researcher took steps to ensure the responses were confidential and that their identity remained anonymous. Often, the credibility of a study is threatened when participants respond according to what they think is the desired outcome due to outsider and/or social power status (Chilisa, 2012). In order to build rapport and gain trust, the researcher remained mindful of the communication process by engaging in active listening and creating a space for participants’ voices and knowledge

systems. Additionally, the researcher built rapport by connecting and providing personal experiences to build upon a reciprocal relationship. First-level member checking was used to verify themes and pattern development (Chilisa, 2012). That is, a member check was used throughout various times of the study. At the end of each interview the researcher summarized what had been shared with participants to review if notes accurately reflect the participant thoughts. Another member check was completed at the final meeting with the participants by providing them with written recorded quotes and initial codes to verify if their thoughts were captured accurately.

Yin (2003) referred to construct validity as establishing the correct operational measures for the concepts being studied. As suggested in the literature, in order to increase construct validity multiple, sources of data were used to triangulate the data. The sources will include interviews, surveys, document analysis, and researcher journal. Peer debriefing will be sought, to allow someone familiar with the phenomena under study to provide feedback on the procedures, finding, analysis and interpretations (Brantlinger et al., 2005). An identified outside peer will be solicited to examine the researcher's transcripts, themes and patterns, final report and methodology and provide feedback to help contribute the research goals.

The researcher engaged in researcher reflexivity by keeping a journal of thoughts, feelings, and concerns throughout the study (Chilisa, 2012; Yin, 1994). During each phase of the study, the researcher used the journal to record thoughts and changes. For example, after each interview, the researcher reflected whether enough time was given to answer a question, and/or if a question was relevant. This main purpose of the research journal allowed the researcher to record reactions, concerns, speculations and adjustments made throughout

the study. The research journal served as an audit trail that details how data was collected, how categories were derived, how the researcher interacted with data, and engaged in analysis and interpretation (Merriam, 2002).

Transferability refers to the extent of how study's findings can be generalized and useful to others in similar situations (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Given the small sample size, generalizing the findings to other populations and settings is a weakness. Transferability was enhanced by selecting participants who are knowledgeable about the topic under study to build a sample that is specific to the needs of the study (Chilisa, 2012). For this study, the purpose was to gain an understanding of detained Hispanic females with disabilities.

Dependability refers to the study's consistency over time and across research methods (Miles et al., 2014). The researcher kept an audit trail of interviews, activities, and the influences on the data collection and analysis. These experiences were later shared by providing a richly detailed account of the field experiences and the researcher's influences on data collection, emerging themes, and categories. Likewise, confirmability refers to the extent which findings in a study can be traced to data found from informants and research design, rather than researcher bias.

Summary

The aim of this chapter is to present the methodology for the current study. In summary, the researcher proposed a qualitative methodology with a multiple case study design to answer the research questions. The instruments intended for the study included in-depth face-to-face interviews, a 30-question Likert-scale survey, and document analysis. Data analysis included coding of themes and patterns of previous experiences and thoughts.

In order to establish trustworthiness, multiple sources of data, member checking, and researcher reflexivity were employed. Lastly, rich descriptions from participants were included in the results section to support or counter emerging themes and patterns.

The following chapter will provide results of the study. These results were gathered and generated from transcribed interviews, document analysis, surveys and the researcher's field notes.

Chapter 4

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center (RTC) and the barriers and challenges they perceive regarding their academic experiences, teacher interactions, and peer influences as they transition to a more traditional school setting. I used interviews, document reviews and a survey as my data collection methods. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about academic experiences for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?
2. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about teacher interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?
3. What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about peer interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?

The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews. The results that follow are an analysis of the data collected from those interviews. Direct quotes were included from the interviews to corroborate and/or identify themes. The included quotes were selected based on relevance and are presented without corrections made to the

language or grammar to maintain the authenticity of both the participant's words and perspective.

This chapter begins with a description of where the initial, and subsequent meetings with the participants were conducted. This will be followed by an explanation of how survey results are reported along with the survey responses. Furthermore, background information is reported along with descriptions of the participants, and the interviews. Information is presented in order of initial meeting, interview responses, survey responses and document analysis to emphasize triangulation within the data. Chapter 5 will then delve into themes that emerged from each individual case study and across the collection of cases as a whole. This cross-case analysis will report data that is specifically linked to the answers of each research question and its relation to self-determination.

Interview Location

All interviews were held in a private office in the building where school was held. There were four classrooms within the school. There were also ancillary offices and some multipurpose spaces. We met in one of these spaces referred to by participants as the "book nook" by participants. It was a 12'x10' room and had shelved books on three of the walls. It may have been called a "library" were it not for its small size. There were two-round tables, several chairs around the table, and a desk with a sign-out sheet for students wanting to check-out books. There were three big windows with blinds that prevented people from looking in or out, and a solid door with a small window that was covered with a thin sheet of butcher paper. There was also a computer in the far left side of the room that was never turned on. We interviewed at one of the round tables.

Survey

Data collection for the survey responses were organized into three broad categories, went as such: I provided the survey item, then combined participant responses on the Likert-scale from 1- Never True and 2- Sometimes True, 3- as True, 4- True a lot of the time and 5- Always True. I calculated the mean for each question by taking the number of participants that chose a combination of survey responses, and divided by the number of participants of the study. For example, if four of the participants chose 1 or 2 for survey item number 1, those four responses were divided by 6 to report that 66% of the participants felt Never/Sometimes True in regards to survey item number 1 “at school I will get the chance to show how much I know.” The set of survey items were paired off with one of the three research questions. Reporting it this way allowed me to look at the information to state if there would be “significant challenges,” “some challenges,” or “little challenges” and barriers once they transition to a school setting. Table 4.1 provides the survey items and the percentage of participants that scored a certain way.

Table 4.1

Survey Responses

Statements	Never True/ Sometimes True (1/2)	True (3)	True A Lot of The Time/ Always True (4/5)
At school I will get the chance to show how much I know.	50%	16%	33%
It will be easy for me to learn new things in school.	66%	16%	16%
I will meet the challenges of doing well in school.	33%	16%	50%
Learning will come easy to me.	83%	16%	

Table 4.1: continued

My grades will be good in school.	50%	33%	16%
I will be academically ready to go back to school.	33%	16%	50%
I will have the academic skills to do well in school.	16%	33%	50%
I will enjoy going to school.	50%		50%
Teachers will treat me with respect.	33%	16%	50%
Teachers will give me choices about how to do my school work.	33%	33%	33%
Teachers will describe my behavior as good in school.	33%	16%	50%
My feelings will count in school.	33%	33%	33%
My teachers will give me choices.	33%	16%	50%
I will be respected and cared about by my teachers in school.	33%	33%	33%
There will be a teacher or teachers that can help me in school.	33%	16%	50%
I will feel welcomed at school by my teachers.	33%	16%	50%
Outside of school, my friends will support me.	33%	16%	50%
My friends will want me to do well in school.	50%		50%
I will be able to rely on my friends for support.	66%		33%
I will be able to rely on my friends to stay out of trouble.	50%		50%
I will make good decisions when I am with my friends.	66%		33%
I will choose friends who make good decisions.	50%	16%	33%

Antonia

Background. The first girl I interviewed was Antonia. Prior to us meeting, the only information I had about her was that she was a Hispanic female in 8th grade, who was fourteen years of age, and received special education services for a learning disability, and an emotional disturbance. Through a review of her admission assessment, I learned that 11-months prior to our first meeting, her parents' rights had been terminated, placing her in permanent managing conservatorship (PMC). I also learned that her previous school behavior, multiple incidents of running away, and poor interactions with her peers are the circumstances that led to her placement at the residential treatment center (RTC). These behaviors were compounded with her being involved in the juvenile justice system for assault. As I continued to delve into her admission assessment, reports indicated that she came from an unstable and chaotic home-life: chronic poverty, frequent moves, a documented history of neglect, which included physical, and emotional abuse, parental drug use, and parental involvement with the law. I would learn that she, herself, had become prone to various high-risk behaviors: self-harm, drug use and sexual activity. In school, there were previously documented episodes which included poor interactions with peers and teachers that often resulted in behavioral incidents. These records also revealed the expected amount of time that Antonia would remain at the RTC was between 7-12 months. A second record review of her Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Full Individualized Evaluation (FIE), affirmed that she received special education services for an identified learning disability (LD) in reading comprehension and mathematics calculation. There is also an emotional disturbance designation, which was first identified in the 4th grade.

First meeting and interview. I first met Antonia in early August of 2016. Our first meeting would be the most formal interaction we would have. I described the components of the signed assent the campus administrator had given me. I carefully described the study and she quietly listened, occasionally nodding her head to let me know she understood and was following me as I spoke. After I finished presenting the information, I asked if she had questions for me. She indicated that she did, indeed, have questions, however her questions would not be about the study. She wanted to know where I was from and if I knew why she was in her current placement. She asked if I worked for the school, what I did, and asked if I would continue to come around after the study. I answered her questions and I would expound on the details of certain questions. For example: I told her I was from Houston and that I left at a young age. I told her I still had friends from middle school and that school was not always easy for me. She shared that she was in foster care and had two siblings who were important to her, but they had been adopted while she had not. We had an easy time talking with one another; rapport was established easily. By the time we were finished talking, she wanted to know exactly what day and time I would be back. I left the meeting feeling confident that we would have a good interview experience. I gave her the signed copy of her assent and reiterated that at any time she could withdraw from the study.

A week later Antonia and I would meet in the ‘book nook,’ and would conduct my first interview for the study. When she arrived for our meeting, I immediately noticed her positive presence, which was emphasized by her smile, hair and make-up. She had black shoulder length hair that was curled and wore eye liner, blush and lipstick that complemented her dark olive skin. She wore blue jeans, a green color three button collar shirt and black low

top Chuck Taylor shoes. She had a medium-build frame, and I made note of her posture, it was straight, with shoulders back and she appeared comfortable, relaxed, and ready for our interview. This is how Antonia would dress and come to all subsequent meetings. She was always ready to share and talk about her thoughts, dressed well, with make-up neatly done on her face. Antonia was the first girl I would interview, and this could not have been a more encouraging experience; especially since, I considered myself a novice researcher. Throughout our time together, Antonia continuously seemed genuinely interested in sharing her story with me; I probed very little in my efforts to get her to share information. She spoke quite at length about how she desires to be adopted and how her circumstances could be better for her if she was part of a family. The interview was very comfortable and I believe we both had a genuinely enlightening experience.

Despite the challenges Antonia has faced in her life, she indicated in her interview responses that she anticipated little challenges and barriers about her upcoming academic experiences when transitioning to a school setting. Her interview responses regarding future teacher interactions revealed some anticipated challenges and barriers, but she was able to identify areas that she would feel confident about when transitioning to a school setting. In fact, her responses revealed a generally positive outlook regarding her future experiences.

When I asked Antonia how she thinks she will perform academically with grades when she returns to a school setting, she replied:

Honestly, I feel like they'll go up because I won't have to be worrying about like when I'm going to leave this place, like, I won't have to like pay attention to my behaviors as much.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

I also asked Antonia how she would describe herself as a student:

Um, that I care about my school work and my education. Oh, and someone who likes to play softball, track and soccer.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

When I asked if she thought teachers would see or treat her differently if they knew her previous setting prior to returning to a school setting, she stated:

Probably. I don't care cause, I feel like if they pick, like I feel like if they knew, they wouldn't pick on me, like not pick on me but like treat me differently they treat other kids, like they would care more.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

I probed a bit further to clarify what she meant by "they would care more:"

Just like help me. I feel like they would just constantly help me and be there and like if they see my grades are down they will like push me to do it. I feel like if you let them know that you want something like you want them to you want to get like passing I feel like they will constantly help you and push you and stuff. I feel like that is a good thing because it pushes you to the next level in your life.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

When I asked Antonia to describe what she would want to see in a teacher, she replied:

I want to see in a teacher that they constantly help you and they like helping you and I don't want to see a teacher that they don't care about how you act, they don't care about what you do in the classroom, like if I were to throw something, they'd just let it go and like I feel me throwing something I should have consequences for that.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Antonia also indicated little anticipation of challenges when it came to future influences and interactions with peers. I asked if she felt that she would make better decisions than her friends would, to which she replied:

I feel like yeah because I've been in the situation where if I don't do right I will come to a place like here.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Her succinct answer showed a noted awareness of the consequences that come with making decisions while not full comprehending the repercussion that may follow. When probed to provide an example of how she will make good decisions, she stated:

Um, well, most of the time they, like they're with you to like fight and like do drugs and like just bad stuff. I feel like if I don't do right I will come back again.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Antonia and I would conclude this interview within 52-minutes. Upon completion, and after the recorder was turned off, we talked a bit more about our next meeting. She and I would meet again, a week later, in the same location. The purpose of this meeting was to review the accuracy of her quotes, and the codes that began to emerge resulting from of our interview. I explained to her the process of transcribing the interview and that I had to listen to the recording of our interview several times. I told her that I made notes of certain topics that I felt stood out in the interview. I showed her a copy of the transcribed interview with the notes I had jotted down on the side. What I had notated consisted of the following codes: Student Needs (learning, teacher, academic and non-academic needs), Teacher Interactions (positive and negative), Post-Secondary goals, Self-Awareness (strengths, limitations), and Peer Relationships (positive and negative). After showing her the codes, I would then provide quotes from our interview and explain why I felt those quotes corresponded with the codes I had chosen. After I presented this information, we talked some, and she agreed that both the quotes and codes were indeed accurate. Before parting, I asked if there was anything she would like to change or add; she informed me that she felt that I heard what she had to say and would not change the data I had collected.

Survey. Antonia's survey responses also indicated little anticipated challenges and barriers regarding academic experiences and transitioning. For example, when ranking herself for survey item, "my grades will be good in school," she scored herself with a (3) indicating true.

While looking at her survey answers concerning future interactions with teachers, her rankings showed some anticipated challenges and barriers to teacher interactions. This was reflected in her survey responses in which she felt: (4) true- a lot of time "my feelings will count in school," and (4) true- "I will be respected and cared about by my teachers in school." The survey also indicated that she feels as if teachers would treat her with respect: (4) true- a lot of the time for "teachers will treat me with respect." Overall, she felt good about teacher interactions when transitioning.

There is noticeable trepidation when it comes to her being able to make good decisions when she is around friends. Her responses to survey items captured the following: (2) sometimes true-"I will make good decisions when I am with my friends." While her survey indicated little anticipated challenges and barriers to peer influences, on which she ranked herself as: (4) true-a lot of time "I will be able to rely on friends for support," she does express concern with her ability to make good decisions when she is with her friends.

Document analysis. I completed a document review of Antonia's IEP and FIE to determine what information would exhibit relevance to her interview and survey responses. What I found was that teachers reported a strength in her IEP stating that Antonia will start lessons and shows a willingness to understand materials presented during class. This stood out given how Antonia responded in her interview when asked how she would describe

herself as a student. She stated that she cared about her work and education. Additionally, her survey also indicated that she felt her grades would be good in school. It was also noted in her IEP that an area of need can be in the classroom, where she sometimes loses focus during instruction, or becomes frustrated easily while attempting to complete her work. Her IEP eligibility areas included a LD in mathematics calculation, and reading comprehension. It was noted in her math present level of functioning that Antonia is working below grade level and when presented with an activity she finds difficult, she can become frustrated at times and shut down. However, teachers also noted in her IEP that an area of strength included her willingness to work with teachers, and politeness when working with other staff members. This was verified in her interview when she stated that she felt that teachers would treat her differently, exhibiting more care toward her. Her survey also included a positive ranking for teachers treating her with respect.

When reviewing the teachers' description of Antonia's behavior within her IEP, they indicated that Antonia struggles in engaging with other peers in off-task behaviors, often leading her and her peers to wander around or skip class, therefore causing her to miss instruction. Teachers also report that Antonia will request frequent breaks and then will take advantage of these breaks, opting to wander the hallway at times disturbing other classrooms. While it is clear, through Antonia's interview that she is aware that she needs to "do right" or she will end up returning to an RTC. She also recognizes the behaviors in which she previously engaged, and the consequences for not making good decisions with friends. She was able to rank herself honestly in which she indicated that she is less confident in her ability to make good decisions with her friends.

By the time Antonia and I had our final meeting, she had become quite attached to my presence, and I looked forward to seeing her, as well. When I was on campus to interview, or meet a participant she would run up to me and ask if I was there to see her, or if I could come get her from class. She would also ask when I would be coming back. After our final meeting, Antonia asked if I would come see her and other classmates perform at the annual RTC Thanksgiving dinner. I told her I would look into it as I did not want to break the protocol rules of the RTC. I thanked her for her help, and information. I gave her a copy of the survey, and we parted ways. After my time with Antonia, I realized I had the pleasure of meeting, and sharing space with an extraordinary, vibrant, and resilient young woman whom already experienced much adversity at a very young age. She was not a girl who was to be defined by her circumstances. She was much more; she wanted more for herself, and she had a good sense of self-awareness, and of what she needed. It left me thinking that I first approached this study with deficit thinking, regarding how the participants would present themselves and the thoughts they would have about their transition. I came away with a greater appreciation of who she is as an individual, and the experience left me with a heavy burden of capturing her narrative, and experiences in a way she truly deserved. I quickly realized that I was entering into something that would require me to exercise a great amount of responsibility: telling these girls' stories.

Marie

Background. My next interview was with Marie, and like my first experience, I walked into our first meeting knowing that Marie was a fourteen year old Hispanic female, in 8th grade, and received special education services for an ED. I conducted a review of her

admission assessment and found that her mother had given up her rights to Marie leading her to be in PMC. I found that prior to her RTC placement, her mother admitted her to a psychiatric facility due to her violent tendencies. Additionally, at the time of her release from the facility, her mother simply failed to retrieve her. Information regarding her legal status reported that she was involved with the juvenile justice system due to indecency with a child and assault. This charge did not come as a surprise to the researcher due to the documented history of sexual abuse she had suffered from her biological father, and the neglect she was subjected to as she was one of nineteen children in the household. As I continued to comb through the admission assessment, her risk indicators included a tendency toward self-harm, running away, and exhibiting aggressiveness toward peers and authority figures.

First meeting and interview. I met Marie in late August of 2016, her firm handshake, attentiveness to me speaking, and inquisitive nature immediately took me off guard as this was my second student interview, and did not know what to expect. I introduced myself to her and expounded on the purpose of our meeting. I covered the components of her signed assent, and explained to her that at any time she could withdraw from the study if she did not want to continue. I assured her that her participation was not linked to grades, behavior, or consequences. As an interviewer, I wanted the participants in my study to feel as safe and comfortable as possible. I opened a discussion for questions or concerns; she wanted to know what would happen once I finished the study. She asked who would read it, and if I was writing a book. We talked about school, and college, and she shared with me that she intended to attend college. She asked how long I have been in school, and if it was hard. She continued with this line of questioning at length, and we spoke for quite some time

solely about academic trajectories. We discussed her classes and she shared how long she has been in the RTC placement. I found that it was determined that Marie would remain at the RTC for a minimum of 12 months. I left our initial meeting feeling good about our interaction as I felt that we had established a comfortable rapport with one another rather quickly.

When I interviewed Marie a week later, I was feeling more self-assured and capable as an interviewer. Marie arrived at our second meeting in what appeared to be a happy and joyful mood. She came to our interview nicely groomed, wearing black jeans, a solid purple t-shirt, and black shoes. She had long light brown hair that was combed, and pulled back tightly in a ponytail. She had a medium build, and carried herself with an air of confidence. In all my dealings with Marie, she always presented herself in the same manner; neatly groomed, in a happy mood, prepared, attentive, and ready to talk. Our interview sessions were relaxed, even though we were discussing serious personal matters. Sometimes the flow of conversation led us off topic; when this occurred, I would knowingly deviate from the interview protocol to gather information that might not be caught within the confines of the more structured questions.

Marie's answers would indicate some perceived challenges to future academic experiences, and transitioning to a more traditional school setting. In her interview, she indicated that there are times when she struggles with understanding concepts, and what is being taught; however, she was aware of her needs, and challenges in regards to academics and behavior. When asked if she found learning math easy or difficult, she responded by saying:

Like sometimes how my teachers explain things, like it feels like they don't explain it like good enough, and then like, when

I ask for that like extra support and help, like they want to know like exactly what I don't understand, and sometimes, like I don't understand any of it, like they can't explain more, they're like no like what do you not get, and like none of it.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

When probed on what subject she did not like, or found difficult, she stated:

English, cause like I don't like the punctuation and like having to spell the word correct and like everything has to be perfect. I can't stand that, cause not everything is perfect around us.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

I also asked her to identify, if she could, challenges she would face with school once she left her current setting.

Extra support and like, like in most classes when I was little, like I didn't understand like adding and subtracting, so like, then, they like said use the calculator it helps, and it helps you to remember things, so that helps, and then like, extra support, and like telling people like teachers has to tell me to stay focused, like I need to stay on task, and like, I get everything read to me.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

As our interview progressed, we shifted topics from academic experiences to teacher interactions. I asked how she thought teachers in school would treat her compared to how they treat other students.

I feel like they would treat me different because like, of course, I'm a foster kid, and I feel that people see us as different and know that we need more help because of the life settings that they've had back home, or other things, so I feel like yeah, they would they'd understand about a break, or they'd understand, like I need a minute to myself, like you know, I feel like they'd would understand and so they would treat me different.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

When asked how she thinks teachers in school would describe her, she stated:

I'm funny, like I have like, a really, like I'm very humorous, like I'm funny, like some people don't understand my personality, so like sometimes, like funny things to me is different, but like most of things to people is the same, so like I'm funny and I don't want people to think it's a bad thing.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

I asked Marie if she thought it would help to find a teacher to connect with.

Yea, because they'd understand what's going on. Like because, like you all, I feel like everybody has to have a teacher that like you're close to, like I'm close to Ms. L, she is my favorite teacher.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

What I learned from Marie's responses regarding her perception of future teacher interactions is that she is confident that her interactions with teachers will be fairly positive as she indicated: teachers would understand her circumstances, teachers would enjoy her humor and personality, and she understood the importance of building connections with teachers.

Marie mentioned not having friends on whom she could rely, but identified her best friend as "different," someone whom she could always rely on when needed.

Yea, um, no, I'm not going to be able to rely on all of my friends. I have a best friend I've know since I was a baby and that's different, but like I don't trust people, like when other people would like, on the the first day of school say, oh, I got two new best friends, and in all reality they're not.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

She also identified her own behavior needs and seems to know who she considers a friend. I also asked if she thought she would make better decisions than her friends.

Sometimes I feel like, that I have to control myself. I mean, I feel like the kids that are late every day, I'd be like dude you're not my friend, and I hate when people say what's up friend,

like that just don't make sense, like I'm not your friend, why are talking to me? And so I feel like kids that are just stupid and do just stupid stuff in school, like what's the point?
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

My interview with Marie lasted for 42 minutes; it proved to be fruitful, and I believe enjoyable for the both of us. Throughout the interview process, she was attentive and answered questions with confidence. After the interview, we discussed when we would meet again, and shared what we would cover in our meeting. I let her know that I would have a printed copy of our interview; we would discuss what I initially found as a result of her responses, and I would want her input on my findings to double-check my understanding and the accuracy of the experiences she shared with me. We would meet a week later and I shared with her the following codes that emerged: Student Needs (learning, teacher, academic and non-academic needs), Teacher Interactions (positive and negative), Post-Secondary Goals, Self-Awareness (strengths, limitations) and Peer Relationships (positive and negative). I explained my thought process for identifying the codes, and what exact quotes were placed under certain codes versus other codes. She was in agreement with my initial thoughts. Prior to us ending this meeting, I asked if there was anything she would like to change in her interview now that a week had passed. She indicated that she would not change anything and we ended the meeting.

Survey. Marie's survey results indicated that she anticipated some challenges and barriers to her academic experiences and transitioning back to a school setting. She ranked herself thusly: (2) sometimes true- "it will be easy for me to learn new things in school," (2)

sometimes true- that “learning will come easy to me,” (4) true a lot of time- “I will meet the challenges of doing well in school.” The last of those scores is notably high.

With respect to interactions and challenges she might face in future teacher interactions, Marie’s survey indicated some anticipated challenges but there were also noted areas that would not be challenging. She ranked herself: (3) true- “I will be respected and cared about by my teachers in school,” (4) true a lot of time- “teachers will describe my behavior as good in school,” and (4) true a lot of time- “there will be a teacher or teachers that can help me in school.”

Marie’s survey answers about peer influences indicated little anticipated challenges for transitioning back to a school setting. Though she scored herself low in one area: (2) sometimes true- “I will be able to rely on my friend for support.” She also believes that she is capable of choosing friends that make good decisions in their life scoring a (3) true- “I will choose friends who make good decisions.”

Document analysis. I completed a review of Marie’s IEP to find evidence that corroborated her responses to interview questions, and survey rankings. Both her IEP and FIE reported that she was first identified for special education services in 4th grade. Her present level of academic achievement and functional performance in Reading report her reading level at a 3rd grade; for this she receives modified instruction in her English Language Arts class. Teachers noted areas of needed improvement; they mentioned that when she is presented with work that she perceives as too hard, Marie will shut down, and stop working. This affirms Marie’s feelings in her interview where mentioned that she does not understand concepts taught by teachers, and why she responded in her survey that it was

sometimes true for being able to learn new things. However, teachers noted that Marie's ability to take responsibility for her learning by advocating for herself when she needed her accommodations of oral reading, or the use of calculator was particularly strong and commended her. Teachers also noted a behavior strength with her ability to recognize when she is frustrated and initiate a self-break to regroup before returning to a task. Another student strength reported by teachers in her IEP included her attempts to complete her classwork, striving to do well in work, her willingness to accept help from teachers and polite interactions with teachers, and staff.

In her interview, Marie expressed that due to certain experiences she has encountered in her past, such as being in foster care, teachers would understand that she needs support. This was also confirmed in her survey by indicating she would be respected and cared about by her teachers. Additionally, her IEP did not include a behavior intervention plan (BIP) and teachers did not document Marie having any struggles with friends. In fact, it was noted that she works well in groups, with partners, and is polite to her peers. In Marie's interview, she stated that she needs to be in control of her own behavior despite the negative behaviors presented by her peers. Her survey also indicated her ability to choose friends who make good decisions.

When we met for our final meeting, it was clear to me that Marie was capable of articulating her struggles, and her needs. I felt that Marie and I had a good relationship. I would see Marie throughout my time at the RTC and without fail I would see her bouncing around the hallways with a big grin, looking to make anyone she ran into smile. She would also stop in the book nook between classes to check in on me, and to share how she was

doing in school. She would stop in and share with me how her grades were coming along at the time. We would exchange pleasantries, and catch up with each subsequent visit, genuinely enjoying each other's company. I thanked Marie for sharing her information and experiences. Marie would also prove to be an exceptional girl with an amazing ability to articulate exactly what she needs in order to be successful in school.

Jackie

Background. I interviewed Jackie next; she proved to be the first girl, in which I had to work hard to gain trust. The campus administrator identified Jackie as a potential participant. She was a 14-year-old, Hispanic female, in the 8th grade, was eligible for special education services due to her designation as LD and ED. Throughout the various times we would meet, it felt as if I was never able to break through her cautious demeanor; it felt as if she held me and our interactions at a noticeable distance. Despite her reserved disposition, I found Jackie to be a pleasant and enjoyable young woman. According to her admission assessment, Jackie was placed into a PMC at the age of ten. Prior to her placement in foster care, her family and home life was punctuated by a history of multiple moves, parents running from child protective services, and her family often being transient. It was documented that her mother and father struggled with drug abuse and that Jackie suffered from physical abuse by both parents and sexual abuse by an unidentified family member. The records detailed below the circumstances that led to her referral, and eventual placement in the RTC. It was noted her placement would be between 7-9 months at the facility. Her foster family felt they could no longer have her in the home in which she resided due to her physical aggression toward her caretakers. Her criminal history and involvement with the

juvenile justice system is due to her being charged with assault. The admission assessment also reported previous school incidents of aggression towards peers and a teacher. From a review of Jackie's records, it was not a surprise to learn that her early life experiences could have predisposed her to engage in several high-risk behaviors: drug use, sexual activity, suicidal ideation, and incidents of running away. I also conducted a document review of her IEP and FIE and found that she was eligible for services for an ED and LD in the area of written expression, reading comprehension, reading fluency, basic reading, mathematics calculations, and mathematics problem-solving. Her FIE indicated she was identified as needing special education services in 3rd grade.

First meeting and interview. My first meeting with Jackie was be brief. I first met her in the first week of September 2016. My initial perception of Jackie during this first meeting was that she was shy, quiet, and very reserved. I explained my purpose, and my research goals; I then asked if she had any questions for me. There was an extensive period of silence where she neither responded nor indicated whether she understood my question. I was caught off guard by her quietness. Because of this silence, I felt I needed reiterate to her that she was under no obligation to participate, and if she decided to withdraw from the study, she would not be penalized nor subject to any consequences. I stressed the point that her participation was voluntary. I wanted her to feel comfortable in her decision to move forward. She stated, in a low, soft voice, that she wanted to participate. I gave her the signed copy of the assent and we made plans to meet again a week later.

Jackie arrived for our interview a week later. Jackie is taller than most girls her age and slender. She has dark brown eyes that matched her long, wavy, dark brown hair, and

brown skin tone. She dressed appropriately for the meeting, wearing green athletic shorts, a black shirt, black and gray Nike shoes. She also wore a hoodie despite the hot temperature outside. She would wear the same black hoodie to each of our meetings, however, it always appeared washed and cleaned. My interview with Jackie was short, and direct but not unfriendly, or as if she did not want to participate. I felt we were able to establish an easy interview rapport, despite her quiet and guarded nature.

We began our interview by discussing her academic experiences. We settled into the book nook and I asked Jackie if she found learning easy or difficult.

Uh, I've been struggling a lot in my classes. Uh, sometimes the teachers give you really hard work and uh, I think the reading is too hard.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

When I asked what challenges she thought she would face with school once she left her current setting, she shared:

Being good, because sometimes, I get really mad at the littlest, the littlest things.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Jackie acknowledged that she struggled academically, and her behavior presents itself as an obstacle to her success as a student. We shifted topics a bit, and I asked about her thoughts regarding teachers and interactions with them. I asked Jackie to describe what she would want to see in a teacher.

Teachers that are nice and they're like, they can be strict over there, so that they, they respect us, like the teachers that would not yell at us, yelling and pushing us around. Like pushing your buttons and making me mad.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

When asked how she thinks teachers in school would describe her, she stated:

Good and bad (laughs), Um, some days I would come to school being good and some days I would, I would skip, school, um, so bad.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Jackie admitted to having a troubled past when it comes to her relationship with teachers.

During the course of the interview, she shared an incident with one of her teachers that escalated into a physical altercation.

I would hit Mrs. L cause she put her hand on me, uh, she like grabbed my arm, so I hit her and then she called the principals and the cop, but she hit me first.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Jackie's feelings about her future interactions with teachers are not optimistic; there is an unease to her when she thinks about her future relationships with her teachers.

We shifted our focus once more and began discussing peer relationships. I asked Jackie to tell me about the relationships she has with peers. According to Jackie, she is capable of making friends quite easily.

It's easy for me to make friends, I don't know why.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

I followed this question by asking if she had friends on whom she could rely if she needed.

While speaking about her relationships with friends, she expressed concern in her ability to choose friends that would have a positive impact on her life.

Um, I'm worried about friends that might not be good for me. Mm, that, they might not be good for me or they, well are they, just, I don't know. I don't know, it just depends on like if they're bad or good.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Jackie's interview was completed within 26 minutes. While her responses were short and direct, I still found her replies to be useful and pertinent to my study. I had to keep in mind the experiences that Jackie has had to endure to understand why she remained guarded and untrusting. I explained to her that we would meet again a week later in the same location. I described to her the purpose of the meeting, how long it would take, and what she would have to do. At our next meeting, I reviewed the questions and asked about the quotes she provided. I asked her if she wanted to change anything she had shared with me. I explained the process of transcribing the interview to her and told her that I listened to the recording of the interview several times and made note of certain topics that I felt stood out in the interview. I showed her a copy of the transcribed interview and the notes I took. I told her the following codes had emerged: Student Needs (learning, teacher, academic and non-academic needs), Teacher Interactions (positive and negative), Self-Awareness (strengths, limitations), and Peer Relationships (positive and negative). After I presented her with this information, I asked her if she thought I had captured her voice and story. She agreed, and to my surprise, because she had been so quiet and reserved throughout the whole process, she stressed that she needed teachers who would care and would check up on her, not just assume that she was a "bad kid."

Survey. When reviewing Jackie's responses to the survey, she indicated a significant level of anticipated challenges and barriers regarding her academic experiences for transitioning back to a school setting. She ranked herself in the following manner: (2) sometimes true- "learning comes easy to me," (1) never true- "it will be easy for me to learn new things in school" and (1) never true- "I will meet the challenges of doing well in school."

Her survey responses also indicated a significant level of anticipated challenges and barriers regarding teacher interactions for transitioning back into a school setting. The following are her responses to the survey items: (2) sometimes true- “my feelings will count in school,” (1) never true-teachers will treat me with respect, (1) never true- “I will be respected and cared about by my teachers in school.”

Additionally, Jackie’s survey responses indicated a significant level of anticipated challenges and barriers regarding peer influences and transitioning back into a school setting by scoring: (2) sometimes true- “I will be able to rely on friend for support,” and (1) never true- “I will choose friends who make good decisions.”

Document analysis. A review into Jackie’s documents was conducted to verify and identify similarities to what Jackie reported in her interview and survey. I reviewed her current IEP and teachers reported that Jackie had significant deficits in reading comprehension, basic reading, mathematics computations and retaining instruction from week-to-week. Additionally, it was reported under behavior that Jackie has threatened her peers and has had incidents of physical and verbal aggression towards fellow students that have required one on one attention, with some of these incidents lasting over 45 minutes. Her survey and interview responses indicate that for Jackie, learning is difficult, and presents a challenge to her academically; it is also a significant source of anxiety for her.

When reviewing her admission assessment, her previous education records documented that Jackie has been aggressive towards teachers in the past, with one incident turning into a physical altercation. Teachers documented behavioral concerns and the impact of her disability in her IEP; when frustrated, she will stop working, and will walk

out of class rather than asking the teacher for help. Her survey also indicated a significant level of anticipated challenges when it comes to future interactions with teachers. These thoughts were captured in her interview and expressed the same level of uncertainty; she anticipated a lack of respect when it comes to teachers' interactions with her.

Both her survey and interview responses indicate that while Jackie is capable of making friends, she shared her apprehension in being able to find friends that would be positive influences in her life. A review of IEP indicated that teachers have observed Jackie's ability to make friends and that, socially, she gets along well with her peers. However, they also noted Jackie's tendency to follow when other peers are engaging in inappropriate behaviors. Other times, she has engaged in inappropriate conversations, secret-keeping, and peer conflict. A final note regarding Jackie's behavior is that teachers acknowledge Jackie, at times, has effectively separated herself from negativity, and does not always feed into conflicts.

When Jackie and I had our final meeting, it was apparent that she was still not ready to let her guard down. However, I would not describe her as being mean, rude or disrespectful. I thanked Jackie for her help and for sharing her information. I gave her a copy of the survey to complete. She looked at it for a minute and then asked if I could read the survey items aloud to her. Trying to hold back my excitement, as I felt this had been a tiny breakthrough, I read the survey aloud to Jackie with her stopping me periodically to clarify her understanding of the survey items. I would return to the facility over the next few months and would run into Jackie occasionally. When we saw each other, she would show the tiniest of smiles, and nod to acknowledge me.

Maddie

Background. My fourth interview was with Maddie, a 14-year-old, Hispanic female, in 8th grade, who was eligible for special education services due to an ED, and LD. She would also be the first of the girls that was in temporary managing conservatorship (TMC). Maddie would prove herself, time and again throughout our meetings, as a confident, positive, self-assured young woman. Just as I had done with the other participants for this study, I conducted a document review of Maddie's admission assessment. I discovered the circumstances that led to Maddie's placement in a RTC was a result of an incident that involved her threatening her mother with a gun. Her criminal history reported that she entered the juvenile justice system as a consequence of an assault charge and her placement would be between 7-12 months. Around the time that legal action was being taken, records about her history indicated that Maddie had been raped, and it was around this time when her behavior began to change, leading toward aggression, sexual activity, and drug use. In addition, the behaviors she engaged in which are considered high-risk include substance abuse, self-harm, anger, physical aggression, being sexually active, inappropriate relationships with older males.

First meeting and interview. I first met Maddie at our introductory meeting to discuss who I am, my purpose, and timelines for the study. She listened to my introduction quietly, and when asked if she had any questions for me, she let me know that she was excited to help. She also expressed that she wanted to help others as a profession in the future. She asked me a few questions, such as how many years it will take to get a Ph.D., and what exactly I did for a living. We talked some more about her and her future goals, and she

conveyed her hope that by participating in the study, she would be able to help others. We discussed the research process, then made plans to meet again. I gave her a copy of her signed assent and left our meeting feeling that a good rapport had been established.

I would meet Maddie again a week later in the book nook for a 47-minute interview. I was able to focus more on Maddie in this second meeting, and noticed that she was a tall girl with a large build. It might be thought that she could be physically imposing to those smaller than her if it were not for her friendly, yet reserved manner. She could be called shy; however, she was not unwilling to participate, and was a very cooperative individual. It would be prudent to note that while shy, she was poised, self-assured, and seemed at ease. It occurred to me that Maddie's self-assuredness might have come from the fact that she was to be released within months of having this interview, and she was aware that she would be returning to her mother's home soon. She came to the interview casually dressed and appropriately groomed. She had light brown hair that fell past her shoulders that and was tucked back behind her ear, revealing large hoop earrings. She wore dark colored blue jeans that seemed a size too small for her, a light gray t-shirt that had a picture of an elephant, and tennis shoes. She was cooperative and eager to fully participate in the interview process.

Throughout our interview, Maddie indicated that she did not anticipate any significant barriers regarding academic experiences for transitioning back into a school setting. When asked about what challenges she may encounter with school once released from the RTC, she spoke about having to rely on her own knowledge and managing her behavior.

Well, I know some challenges, I guess knowing I don't have the teachers I have here, so it's kind of like thinking like putting my own, like my own tools to like my knowledge.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

I asked Maddie to expand on her thoughts.

Um, just like self-behavior, like managing, like how to manage yourself when you're really, really, like irritated, and like just like not taking it out on the wrong crowd.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

She continued to speak on the matter and I allowed her to do so, which allowed her to reflect on her thought process a bit more. While it was apparent that she had her concerns, ultimately, she was confident in her abilities, and had a positive outlook toward returning to a traditional school setting.

I feel like, like it's going to be fun, because I've been able to use my tools here, and like, I will be able to put it to home. So, I feel like it'll be a good challenge for me. So, I am really excited about it, it'll be like, I feel like I gained a lot here, so it won't be hard for me to like switch my mind thought in a certain moment, so I'll be okay.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

I asked her if she found learning easy or difficult.

I know sometimes that it takes me awhile for me to like catch on, but cause I know I have a disability, but like um, I'm not like a fast learner, but when it comes to a small group I can be.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

I was also curious about whether she felt that teachers would treat her differently if they knew about her past or her current circumstances, to which she responded:

Um, probably not that much, because I know some teachers want, you know, they don't have favorites because some other kids you know, don't like that, but I feel like they'll kind of they'll treat me the same as everyone in a regular school. I mean because it's a regular school, of course it's like kind of

like the real world. I really don't think they'll treat me different. They might look at it cause like I know some people will look at it like oh, she was in CPS or what's up with this.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

I also asked her to describe what she would like to see in a teacher, to which she answered:

I would want to see a teacher as like a good friend, like Mr. K, he's really nice and patient, also like Mr. M he's a really fun teacher, like um, like we have that connection, where like the teacher, where they're nice and funny they're not always so mean.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

As an interviewer, I noted her responses were thorough and well thought out so I probed further by asking what she would not want to see in a teacher.

Um, I would not want to see a teacher like always hard on me or yelling at me on somethings. I know it's going to happen but I like a teacher that realizes sometimes I need a break, so I would, I would want them to respect my boundaries.
Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

We next moved on to the subject of peers. I was curious to learn what she would have to say about her interactions with her fellow students. I asked Maddie about her relationships with friends.

Sometimes they can be really negative and sometimes there's not a lot of kids to go for advice, so, you kind of have to really like get into, I feel like I really have to find friends with not much drama.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

I then asked whether she would be making better decisions than her peers in the future.

Um, I feel like I'll make better decisions because I've been waiting for a long time to get out of here and put like what I learned to practice to like a real school, and all that so, I feel like I'll be good at that, but I know the first thing is to go to an adult first then a friend.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

After the interview was conducted, I met with Maddie again a week later to discuss the codes, and themes that had emerged during the interview process. I shared with her my initial thoughts and wanted to ensure that I had captured her quotes and narrative from her perspective as accurately as possible. I highlighted the following codes from our interview: Student Needs (learning, teacher, academic and non-academic needs), Teacher Interactions (positive and negative), Post-Secondary Goals, Self-Awareness (strengths, limitations), and Peer Relationships (positive and negative). I asked Maddie if she felt that the codes I captured were accurate. She informed me that I did a great job of taking her words and putting them into groups. She asked if the codes would remain as I had presented her words or if they would change. She also wanted to know if past events would influence the codes. I found her questions insightful, and I complimented her. I informed her that these were initial codes and that I would add more codes and categories.

Survey. Maddie's survey responses indicated that she did not anticipate any significant barriers regarding academic experiences for transitioning back into a school setting. This was reflected by her high ranking of: (5) always true- "I will meet the challenges of doing well in school," (3) true- "it will be easy for me to learn new things in school," (3) true- "learning will come easy to me," and (5) always true- "I will enjoy going to school."

She felt confident regarding her future interactions with teachers and this was reflected in her survey responses with her ranking of: (5) always true- "I will be respected and cared about by teachers in school," (5) "my feelings will count in school," and (5) "teachers will treat me with respect."

Additionally, Maddie's survey responses indicated that she does not anticipate challenges and barriers regarding peer influences and transitioning back into a school setting with her ranking of: (5) always true- "I will make good decision when I am with my friends," and (5) "I will be able to rely on my friends for support."

Something of note within her survey is that Maddie ranked herself accordingly to each question, but also wrote short responses on several survey items. For example: My grades will be good in school, she ranked (5) "always true" and wrote "work hard goals," (5) always true- "Teachers will describe my behavior as good in school," she wrote "when I do good, yes," (5) always true- "I will be able to rely on my friends for support," "Yes, a good friend." As the one collecting data and conducting the interview, I felt this was noteworthy in that it gives insight into the kind of individual that Maddie happens to be.

Document analysis. The information Maddie shared in the interview and survey was verified by a review of her records. Maddie knows that while there may be challenges regarding her future academic experiences, she ultimately recognizes that she will have to practice what she has learned if she wants to succeed. This sentiment was also shared in her survey. A behavior strength that was noted in her IEP is that Maddie shows the ability to interact appropriately in the classroom, and complete her work. While Maddie does require breaks outside the class, or building, teachers noted that she has shown that she can compromise and remain accountable for attending school.

Her interview and survey responses also aligned with the information recorded in her document analysis about future interactions with teachers. It was documented by her teachers that Maddie has a positive outlook, she is caring, intelligent, seeks out staff members when

she needs help, and has developed positive working relationships with staff members. Furthermore, noted behavior strengths include: good relationships with peers, works well in groups, and she is often the leader in class. This was also captured in her interview as she feels confident in making better decisions than friends, and the fact that she recognizes the need to find friends without “drama.” Maddie also addressed these issues in her survey.

When Maddie’s participation was at an end, I felt that we had established a good working relationship. Our conversations were reciprocal, and had a good flow. At our final meeting, I gave her the survey, and I thanked her for participating. As I spent the next few months at the RTC, I would see Maddie now and again, she would always make a point to come up to me, and ask how I was doing. We would discuss varying topics, from her music class, to movies, and television shows we had watched. She also kept me abreast of her upcoming move outside of the facility and always asked how the study was progressing. There was no doubt in my mind that Maddie and I had made a connection.

Katy

Background. Katy was my penultimate interview. She met the study’s participant criteria for being a Hispanic female in the 8th grade, age 14, receiving special education services for an ED. Throughout our meetings, Katy would present herself as a willing participant; she was compliant, answered questions with concentrated effort, and did not show signs of anxiety. Katy’s admission assessment indicated she was placed in PMC two years prior to our meeting. Like many of the girls in the study, Katy has a history of abuse that was perpetrated by people in her home. Her brother was sexually abusive, and her father was both physically, and sexually abusive toward her. Her father is currently incarcerated

because of this abuse. To compound these problems, there was a woeful lack of structure in her home life which led to placements in multiple schools; there was also documented emotional abuse, as well as general neglect. Circumstances that led to her RTC placement resulted from Katy starting a fire in her foster family's home, exhibited aggression toward her foster family, peers, and teachers. Katy's criminal history reported involvement with the juvenile justice system due to an assault charge. Also within her admission assessment, specifically regarding her psychological history, it was documented that Katy experiences audio, and visual hallucinations. Furthermore, a history of high-risk behaviors had been reported; drug use, and acting out sexually, and a documented incident of her posting a video on social media that featured her engaged in a sexually explicit act. It was anticipated that Katy would be at the RTC between 7-12 months. A review of her IEP and FIE revealed that she had received special education services for ED since the 6th grade.

First meeting and interview. Upon our first meeting, I introduced myself to Katy, and covered the components of the study. I asked if she had questions for me, or if any areas of the assent required clarification. She questioned why I choose her, what this study was about, and how many times we would meet. I answered her questions using the assent to help address the queries she posed. At first, Katy seemed guarded but not so much that it prohibited us from having a nice exchange. I gave her a copy of her signed assent. While at this point I, as the interviewer, was becoming more comfortable within the interview process, Katy presented something new. I was caught off guard by the fact that she seemed to be answering the questions I had for her as if she was speaking about someone else. Though her

answers were coherent and organized, there was an incongruence between the girl I was interviewing, and the girl she was talking about.

I would meet Katy again a week later to sit down for our 34-minute interview. She came to the book nook willingly, and appeared ready to interview. She dressed appropriately, and looked the same age as her peers. She had short, straight, light brown hair, and wore a white colored t-shirt with white shoes. When she smiled, her braces were only slightly visible, as if she was purposely trying to hide her teeth. She made eye contact regularly and was fairly open to speaking with me. We dove right into the interview. I asked Katy if she felt learning would be easy or hard, to which she replied:

Um, it's probably going to be harder because it's going to like, um, a lot of like things need to be done, and I'm going to have to like be able to learn how to do things on my own and be able to catch up.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Katy recognized the challenges that will present themselves to her when she enters a more traditional school setting. She feels that it will not be easy for her to learn new things. When asked how she thinks teachers would describe her, she stated:

Um, they probably would describe me depending on how I do. If I started hanging out with the wrong friends, they'll probably be like, oh, she's a troublemaker. She doesn't focus on school and stuff like that.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

I also asked Katy to think about future teachers and what she would like to see in a teacher.

I think they going to be, they're going to be more, um pushy to help me do better, but at the same time, they're going to get frustrated sometimes with me, because if there teaching something and I don't understand they have to go on for the other kids but really, I'll be asking questions.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Katy recognized that she needs to be pushed to get results, and she is confident she will come across teachers that will be up for the challenge of having her in class and motivating her to make progress.

We switched topics, and discussed the prospect of making friends in the future. I asked Katy if she had friends she could rely on to help her.

Yeah, I'm probably going to be like the person who, that sits alone, and I'm going to let like, I'm not going to be like, I'm going to let the people who want to be friends and ask me. I'm not going to go towards them, cause usually when I go towards them, they're usually mean, like I choose mean people. I don't know, it's just like I don't know, it's in me, I guess cause, I'm like, I'm really bad.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Her response showed an acute awareness of the kinds of friends that she has made in the past; she knows that she gravitates to those who may not turn out to be good friends for her.

We concluded our meeting, and I explained to Katy that would meet again for a face-to-face sit down to clarify questions, answers, and fill out a survey. At our next meeting, I shared with her my initial findings, and codes as they began to emerge: Student Needs (learning, teacher, academic and non-academic needs), Teacher Interactions (positive and negative), Post-Secondary Goals, Self-Awareness (strengths, limitations), and Peer Relationships (positive and negative). Specific quotes were shared, and I explained to her that I had a chart where I was making notes of the topics that were discussed in each interview. I stated that I wanted to share her information, but wanted to make sure that I captured what she said accurately. She was in agreement that I captured her thoughts with accuracy and my initial codes/ideas were correct.

Survey. Katy is very much aware of her circumstances and the challenges she might face with transitioning back into a traditional school setting. Her survey answers indicated that she anticipated quite a few challenges and barriers to a successful transition. She scored low on the following item statements: (2) sometimes true- “it will be easy for me to learn new things in school,” and (2) sometimes true- “learning will come easy to me.”

Regarding relationships with teachers, she scored: (2) sometime true- “teachers will describe my behavior as good in school,” (3) true- “I will be respected and cared about by my teacher,” and (3) true- “there will be a teacher or teachers that can help me in school.” This indicates that Katy anticipates some challenges in respect to teacher interactions.

On survey items about her relationships with friends, Katy anticipates challenges and barriers regarding peer influences and transitioning back to a school setting. She scored herself low on the following survey item: (1) never true- “I will be able to rely on friends to stay out of trouble.” She is not confident that she can find friends on whom she can rely when in need.

Document analysis. Her interview, and survey indicate that learning will be difficult. In the education section of her admission assessment, Katy is noted as having behavioral problems in school. Over the course of her 6th grade school year, Katy had attended at least seven different school campuses. As with any change in school, there is a likelihood of missed instruction, or inconsistency in the educational programming. Students who move frequently from school to school, often experience missed course work, and can get behind in subject areas.

In her interview, Katy acknowledged that teachers will need to be pushy, describes her own behavior as that of a “troublemaker,” and stated that sometimes teachers will get frustrated because of her lack of understanding. The sentiment was captured in her survey responses. According to her current IEP, teachers documented incidents related to not listening to authority figures, not completing work, and becoming physically and verbally aggressive with teachers. Her IEP records also indicate that Katy has a history of struggling academically. She receives support and modified instruction for Math and Reading, and teachers report that she is not able to perform on grade level.

In her interview and survey, Katy revealed a distrust in her ability to make positive relationships with peers. Katy’s tendency to become confrontational, and verbally aggressive with her peers are also documented within her IEP, and admission assessment. Furthermore, she reportedly isolates herself in class, does not work well with others or in groups, and becomes frustrated easily with others in the classroom. The teachers report frequent peer conflicts within the classroom and a tendency to become very angry with little provocation from peers.

When we last met for the study, I thanked Katy for her participation in the study, and gave her a copy of the survey to fill out. By the time we had our final meeting, she did not seem as guarded as she was in our first conference. However, throughout the interview, while I felt there was a disconnect with how Katy described certain topics, I still found Katy to be forthcoming, straightforward, and sincere with her responses, and interactions with me. She has high aspirations for her future goals, which I believe are attainable with hard work. Occasionally, I would see Katy on campus; she would come up to me, ask how I was doing,

and I would check in on her. I left feeling that she and I made a connection during the process of this study.

Alyssa

Background. My final interview would be with Alyssa, a 13 year-old, Hispanic female, in the 7th grade, receiving special education services an ED. She would also be the shortest interview I would conduct with my participants lasting a total of only 26 minutes. However, despite the brevity of our interview, she would reveal pertinent information relevant to the study's goals and purpose. After reviewing her records, I found that Alyssa's referral to RTC included sexual activity with a 22 year old, whom she referred in documents to as her boyfriend, prostitution and drug use. Her involvement in the juvenile justice system resulted from an assault charge, much like the other girls in this study. A description of her home environment revealed incidents of neglect, frequent moves, lack of discipline, and domestic violence between her parents. She also witnessed her parent's drug abuse, which resulted in her father's incarceration for drug-related charges. As result of her family issues, she was placed in a PMC. The document analysis also revealed high-risk indicators ranging from self-harm, cutting herself, suicidal ideation with an attempt to choke herself with an electrical cord, drug use, and physical aggression. It was determined that Alyssa's placement at the RTC would be between 4-6 months. A review of her IEP and FIE found that she was identified as eligible for special education services in 5th grade for ED. Also noted was the fact that she had been withdrawn from school during her 6th grade year by her mother, citing poor relationships with peers.

First meeting and interview. I met Alyssa in late September in 2016 for our initial meeting. I introduced myself, and briefly went over her signed assent. Throughout my explanation of the assent, she would interrupt apologetically with questions. She wanted to know what I was studying at the University of Texas and why. She asked general questions about me. Where did I work? Where I was from? In our initial interactions, Alyssa appeared fidgety. She would shift in her chair and play with the pencil that happened to be on the table. I allowed the distraction as she was answering questions with appropriate responses, but I made a mental note that I would need to conduct the interview with structure in order to keep her focused on the task at hand. I asked if she had any further questions, and scheduled a time when we would meet again. I gave a copy of the signed assent, and we parted. I felt that rapport was established easily despite her disposition toward being distracted, and I left to prepare for our next meeting.

I would sit down with Alyssa in the book nook for our interview a week later. Overall, she would be the most difficult interview conducted with the girls. She came to the interview wearing pajama bottoms that resembled sweat pants, house shoes, and a wrinkled t-shirt. She had long, reddish-brown hair that appeared uncombed, but was tied up in a bun. She would attend all subsequent meetings with this disheveled look. Also notable was her larger appearance, she was taller than most of her peers, and spoke with a loud voice. When discussing past interactions with teachers, and peers, she would speak louder with her eyes widening. However, at various times throughout our interview, she would sink down in her chair and would speak with a low voice when discussing certain topics.

When discussing challenges and her academic ability, I asked if she found learning easy or difficult.

Um, I like to write, I'm good at reading (laughter) that's a good thing. Uh, I'm good at spelling. Uh, I'm not really good at like math. Uh, I am not good at that at all. I'm good at sports, but I'm not really good at like math, but I'm good at sports.
[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

When I inquired about potential barriers, challenges, and areas she felt she would need support, she stated:

Um, like structure. I didn't have structure and I needed, like, I didn't have study time at my house and behavior. Cause, I always have to have the last word (laughs). Uh, I can sometimes get distracted by family.
[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

Her distractions seemingly came in fluctuations with her mood and were present during the interview process. Her mood could shift suddenly from one line of questioning or conversation to the other.

When asked about possible interactions with teachers in the future, Alyssa indicated that she expects challenges. I asked what she thought about future teachers and what she would like to see in a teacher. I could sense there was a reluctance to answer on her part, after some initial hesitation, she did eventually answer. However, instead responding to the question outright, she shared what she did not want to see in a teacher.

Um, so I just, I don't want someone being really rude and like if they see me and I need help, like, I don't want someone to rolls his eyes at me. And, like yeah, sometimes people, teachers who play, but pretend like they are but most of the time they are not playing, but being rude, straight up rude and I don't like it.
[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

As she seemed to relax, I probed further by asking whether she felt some teachers might treat her differently due to her circumstances.

I feel like people that would like be sensitive towards me, but
I want to be treated like everyone else.
[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

We shifted topics into a discussion about peers. Alyssa had already revealed little faith regarding her future academic experiences, and interactions between both herself and teachers, her dealings with peers seemed to be no different. When asked if she had any friends on whom she could rely for support, she answered:

Um hmm, no, uh, I have bad, yeah, they liked to do bad things.
But, I'm not going to say friends, because they are not my
friends. They are my acquaintances. I have some supportive
people, slash, kids. Yeah, Mm, sometimes they like ask me if
I'm okay, or they like give me a compliment, or yeah just like,
or sometimes they like make me laugh or make me happy
when I'm sad.
[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

After the interview, I set up another meeting time with Alyssa. We would meet again a week later to discuss the codes and themes that had emerged during the interview process. Prior to presenting my information to her, I reminded her of our interview, the questions asked, and how she responded. I gave her copy of the interview with my notes, and we looked over them together. This allowed us stay on track, and let her see how she responded. I explained to her my process, and indicated that the following codes emerged from our interview: Student Needs (learning, teacher, academic and non-academic needs), Teacher Interactions (positive and negative), Post-Secondary Goals, Self-Awareness (strengths, limitations), and Peer Relationships (positive and negative). I asked if she felt the codes and

quotes were accurate, to which she agreed that they were indeed. She also stressed again that she needed teachers who care about her, would check up on her, and not dismiss her.

Survey. Alyssa's survey responses showed a significant level of anticipated challenges and barriers regarding academic experiences for transitioning back into a school setting. Her survey indicates that she has very low confidence in her academic abilities to meet the challenges she will face in a more traditional school setting. She ranked herself as: (1) never true- "I will meet the challenges of doing well in school," and (2) sometimes true- "it will be easy for me to learn new things in school."

From her survey answers, you can glean a feeling that Alyssa, in general, does not feel that she is cared for or respected by teachers: (2) sometimes true- "teachers will treat me with respect," and (1) never true- "I will be respected and cared about by my teachers in school."

Alyssa's responses also indicate a significant level of anticipated challenges, and barriers regarding peer influences: (1) never true- "I will be able to rely on my friends to stay out of trouble," and (2) sometimes true- "I will be able to rely on my friends for support."

Document analysis. A review of her IEP documents revealed that mathematics is an identified area of academic weakness. She struggles with mathematics calculations, and teachers report she is working several grade levels below her enrolled grade; she receives modified math instruction with accommodations. In her interview, Alyssa indicated that she enjoys reading, and is good at sports, however, she struggles with math. Her survey responses also seemed to reinforce her awareness of these issues. As I combed through her IEP, I found that teachers reported areas of need within the classroom for Alyssa were concentration, and

paying attention. In regards to behavior, they mentioned that she is easily frustrated, and struggles with staying on task. Judging from her interview, and survey responses, Alyssa knows that a lack of structure, and her behavior can contribute to her lack of success.

In the behavior section of her IEP, teachers also reported that Alyssa has difficulty maintaining healthy relationships with peers in school. Teachers also mentioned her inability to keep friends for very long. Also indicated in her assessment review was that Alyssa missed most of her 6th grade year as result of her mother withdrawing her from school due to physical and verbal aggression with peers. She shared in her interview that she felt she would never be able to rely on friends to stay out of trouble. Her survey responses corroborated that feeling.

At our last meeting, I thanked Alyssa for her participation in the study. While Alyssa would prove to be the most difficult girl to interview, I relied on my years of experience as an educator to accommodate her when she would wander off subject, or seemed upset during the interview process. I was patient with Alyssa, and I like to think she was able to sense this in my interactions with her. I also found the information Alyssa shared both in the interview and the survey valuable and worth noting. She was keenly aware of what she wanted. She expressed her desire to graduate and succeed. I found our experience pleasurable, and I enjoyed the opportunity to meet and share Alyssa's story. I thanked her again for the study, and gave her the survey. As we parted, she wished me luck with my study. I would spend a few more weeks on campus, while I gathered data. I would occasionally see Alyssa roaming the hallways. Even if she was upset, she would still acknowledge my presence and would indicate that she was having a hard day. I would keep

our conversations to a minimum as not to interfere with any possible intervention that was in progress.

Preliminary Analysis

While the data presented in this chapter is of a case by case nature, it still captures the common attributes of the group as a whole. Therefore, as one combs through the data from all three sources: interview, survey, document analysis, one will begin to see commonalities amongst the attitudes, views and opinions about these girls' futures. Themes emerged as I analyzed the data at hand, and I could see that these girls, though in extraordinary circumstances, wanted the same opportunities afforded to any other student. The themes are simple, yet fittingly relatable to anyone who has been met with any type of challenge. The themes that arose from the first research question deal with their troubles with learning and behavior and show that these girls are quite self-aware and refuse to allow their troubles to limit them. From question two, emerged themes of relationships and goals for the future. These make it apparent that despite their challenges, these girls know what they want and remain optimistic. The third research question's theme addressed the despite their challenges, these girls know what they want and remain optimistic.

Summary

The data presented in this chapter consists of quotes from the interviews I conducted with the participants in my study, data from a survey they responded to, and an analysis of the documents with the girls' information files. The documents include the admission assessment, IEPs, and FIEs. The interviews were of a semi-structured nature that allowed for a more natural flow of conversation, probing, and which in turn led to more information

being shared. This also was essential in establishing a natural rapport with the participants. Because of the more relaxed nature of our interactions, the interviews tended to veer from typical interview protocol. The responses to the survey and the interview questions addressed the areas in which challenges that could present themselves such as: academic ability, processing the necessary skills, how teachers would perceive them based on how they perceived themselves, how past teacher interactions caused anxiety regarding future interactions, and finding peers whom would be a positive influence or provide support. While there were notable differences among the participants, many spoke of requiring the same support and understanding from those overseeing their education. Each girl spoke about their strengths both in, and out of the classroom, and their future goals. As I analyzed the data, themes emerged that brought the group together as a whole; the individual stories of these girls that had played out before me were now becoming a narrative that encompassed each of the girls in this group. The themes will be discussed further in the following chapter. What I learned was that each of these girls were resilient, strong young women who had endured more in their short lifetime than most. These girls are survivors and it is a privilege to be able to tell their story.

Chapter 5

The results for this study are presented in two chapters due to the variety of information I present as findings. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, my goal is to tell the stories of these girls as accurately and meaningfully as possible. Each case study told a story and provided a glimpse of the complex phenomena that are the lives of Hispanic females with disabilities residing in a residential treatment center. While current literature discusses transition services to help juveniles successfully reintegrate into schools and community settings, there is limited research that explores these youth own perceptions, needs, and challenges associated with reentry. Furthermore, there was a need for research to examine perceived barriers to school success and transition from RTC that addressed gender, disability and cultural differences. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine how Hispanic females with disabilities, and their expectations regarding transitioning back into a school setting, with a particular focus of the study being on the expectations these young women hold about their academic experiences, teacher interactions, and peer influences. In order to provide a more complete picture, I contextualized participants' comments by presenting the resulting themes with evidence from quotes. Whereas the previous chapter examined each case study individually and provided triangulation, this chapter provides a holistic view of all six case studies for a complete view of the challenges and barriers to transition. There were five themes that comprised this chapter and represent participants' overall perspectives and experiences. Each theme is presented as it relates to and answers each of the research questions. Therefore, the research questions are presented with their specific themes, cross-case interview data, survey results, and document analysis. While I

will provide some insight into the theories that drove this study: self-determination theory (SDT) and deficit thinking, further detail of those theories and their connection to the study will be explored in the proceeding chapter.

The girls in this study were selected for the circumstances in which they found themselves, as well as their similar backgrounds and school records: all six girls were involved in the juvenile justice system for assault, all girls had shown tendencies toward self-harm, all had been sexually abused or assaulted, and all six girls received special education services. The girls all had differing lengths of stay at the residential facility; however, their stays averaged between 4-12 months.

Research Question 1: What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about academic experiences for middle school, Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?

Initial questions asked during the interview were: Do you find learning easy or difficult? How do you think you will do academically at school when released from this setting? What are some barrier or challenges you think you face with school once you are released from this setting? These questions related to the first research question, and let the girls answer a complex question about their education in a fashion to which they were accustomed. During the interview process, all participants seemed focused and answered with resolve. The early codes that came up as a result of their answers centered around the needs of the participants, the awareness they had regarding their past behavior, and possible post-secondary goals. Upon the second cycle of coding, I noted their need to overcome academic issues such as their classroom behavior and performances, their self-awareness, and the strengths they

recognized in themselves both in and outside of the classroom. As the codes evolved so did the themes concerning research question one. Themes for the first research question were: “Learning does not come easy, but I know what can help” and “My behavior does not define me.”

Theme One. Learning does not come easy but I know what can help. All six participants identified learning as difficult citing various issues, among them: the way teachers presented information, teachers becoming frustrated with their inability to catch on to information quickly, and or struggling with subject matter they felt was challenging. One participant identified learning and focusing as the most difficult aspects of learning with which she struggles. All participants identified what was needed in order to help them succeed academically: accommodations in the classroom. While only one participant specifically used the term “accommodation” three described common classroom accommodations such as reading aloud, breaks, sitting at the front of class, smaller class, and less distractions. Another participant was unable to identify specifically what support was needed, but stated she knew she needed special classroom support. Three participants expressed concern at the prospect of not having a teacher to provide support for them in the classroom.

Antonia expressed that learning is not an easy task in general terms, but is aware of her need for extra support. She indicated that focusing on her instruction was the main concern. Antonia knows she needs support to help her academically even though she was unable to identify the specific support she needs.

It’s hard for me, it’s hard, learning and focusing. Sometimes,
I need, extra help to, I need that special support for help.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Maddie stated she was aware it took her longer to catch on to things, and the importance of teachers knowing this about her, and her needs for learning.

I know sometimes that it takes a while for me to like catch on, cause, I know, I'm not like a fast learner. I would want them to know yeah, sometimes, I have a little hard time learning, so sometimes, like, sometimes you have to be one-on-one just going over for a little bit where someone is reading to me, that's all.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

Maddie also knows what an effective environment for learning needs to entail.

Yeah, like staying up in the front of the class, asking questions. Smaller classes, so it's easier for me to learn. When it comes to small group, I sometimes, like, I need a little more direct teaching, but I'm pretty much fine when I'm in a small group.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

Marie identified a teacher's method of presenting information as a significant source of anxiety.

Like sometimes how my teachers explain things, like it feels like they don't explain it like good enough, and then like, when I ask for that like extra support and help, like they want to know like exactly what I don't understand, and sometimes like I don't understand any of it.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Marie further explained her academic and behavioral accommodations and what is needed for her to succeed.

Um, like, I get extra help, like sometimes, I get everything read out to me during test, and so it's just like extra help. Um, breaks, like being able to take like a five-minute break, or something. My accommodations, and like, yeah, my accommodations.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Jackie shared where she struggled with learning, and her needs.

Uh, sometimes the teachers give you really hard work and uh, I think the reading is too hard.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Yeah, stuff is read. It's makes it a little bit better, I do and don't like it. I'm just shy. I know it helps me. I like having stuff read to me. You understand it better when it's read but I'm shy with that stuff.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Katy was concerned with the possibility of teachers becoming frustrated with her, and how that would affect her academic performance.

They're going to get frustrated sometimes with me, because like, if they're teaching something, and I don't understand, they have to go on for other the other kids, but really, I'll be still asking questions.

[Katy, 9/26]

Katy shared how she does not want information presented based on a previous experience.

Depending on how they teach it. For example, my teacher, I had a social studies teacher, um, my history teacher, she would do like a power point every time. Once she went all the way down, then you could ask questions. You have to write everything down, write everything down, and like at the end, you try to ask questions and she's like, "oh it's time to go to the next class". Then you never got to ask questions, or learn.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Alyssa shared where she struggled and what she needed.

Uh, I'm not really good at like math, uh, I am not good at that at all. I want help with math.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/26]

I think my brain is trying to process stuff too fast. I need a small class, not too many kids, then there's not too many distractions.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Antonia, Maddie and Marie explicitly expressed anxiety at the thought of not having a teacher to provide support for them in the classroom.

I'm worried that there's not going to be very much, like help from teachers.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Getting more support between teachers, and like, more and more, like I'm reasonably more ground in here.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Well, I know some challenges. I guess knowing I don't have the teachers I have here, so it's kind of like putting my own, like, my own tools to, like, my knowledge, and my trying to figure something out.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/6]

Each individual is able to articulate that which may be able to help them succeed in the classroom. They are also clearly aware of the fact that they have trouble in a more traditional classroom setting.

Theme Two. My behavior doesn't define me. A constant factor that colors the lives of these girls is the issue of behavior. They recognized that past behaviors negatively affected their academic performance and experience. Throughout the interview process, an equally if not more an important theme began to emerge. While the participants described their past behaviors in negative terms, these girls felt that their behavior does not define them or their future.

As mentioned earlier, all these girls have been charged with assault in the past and four participants cited fighting as a prominent behavior in school.

Like, I was always focused on like, fighting. I would never do my work in class, and, if I didn't do that, I skipped school.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Antonia also shared a previous experience with her math teacher she did not particularly care for and described her behavior inside of the classroom.

I would never do my work in his class. I always had bad grades in his class. I always got kicked out of class for stupid stuff, either, like throwing stuff at somebody, or um, my mumbling under my breath, or talking back.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Marie also talked about her past behaviors and how it affected her grades.

Well, refusing to do work, but I don't know, like it's hard to tell. It depended on the day and the teacher. I didn't listen and I would fight. I messed up. I know that.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Five participants described circumstances that typically kept them out of the mainstream classroom. At times absences from school were beyond their control, such as when they were withdrawn by parents, but often behavioral incidents would see them disciplined, and therefore suspended from the classroom, or they would simply skip classes. Maddie and Jackie both shared experiences in which they were out of the classroom because the teacher sent them out of class for behavior issues, or because they deliberately skipped school. These behaviors resulted in loss of academic learning for both girls.

I would miss school. I guess I would get in trouble, like I wouldn't pay attention in class, I was bad. I would talk back to teacher, they would send me out of the class because I didn't want to be in class.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

I would skip school. I would cuss out the teachers. Um, I would hit the teacher. I would always act up and fight. [Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Katy also experienced academic time lost from the classroom due to behaviors.

I spent most of my time in um, ISS. Because, I got in a lot of fights, for like people talking stuff about me. And, it was like um, I got suspended a lot for um, um, being, um, being disrespectful. I think they thought I was like one of those bad kids, like misbehaving, things like that.
[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

ISS is an acronym for in school suspension. Rather than suspension that involves being away from school, an area is designated within the school, and the student is removed from the instructional setting for a set amount of time as a consequence. This is usually implemented to keep the individual in a scholastic setting so the student does not fall behind in their work.

Alyssa also missed quite a bit of academic time, however she was removed all together from school during her 6th grade year by her mother.

I wasn't good in school. When I was there, I would get in fights. But, I wasn't really in school. I was in uh, for like a week. I was in school, I think for like three weeks. Uh, I wasn't in school.
[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

Regardless of the motivation the participants had for their previous behaviors, it was evident by their responses that the girls were self-aware, and able to articulate their thoughts clearly when being asked how they would describe themselves transitioning from their current setting. It was apparent from their responses, they see themselves as more than just girls in the system who misbehave. When asked how they would describe themselves, five of six participants used phrases like the following to describe themselves and school: "care about my education," "I like school," "I can bounce myself into

something positive,” “she does really good,” “tries to not let that affect her grades.”

Antonia indicated she cared about schoolwork, and her education. She also added that there is more to her than just schoolwork.

Um, that I care about my schoolwork and my education. I would say that I’m fourteen. I’m in foster care and I have three siblings that mean a lot to me.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Marie also expressed a need for people to understand her personality, and that her personality is the key to her success and learning. She also demonstrates an awareness of herself that extends beyond academics.

They’d be like, she’s really funny and energetic. Like, she likes to learn hands on, and she likes, like she likes school a lot. I’m funny. Like, I have like, a really like, I’m very humorous. Like, like, I’m really funny. Like some people, like don’t understand my personality, so like sometimes, like funny things to me is different, but like most of the things to people is the same. So like it’s just I’m funny and I don’t want people to think it’s a bad thing.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Maddie also cited that she is aware of her situation, but noted her confidence in her ability to turn things around.

I feel like, um, I’m a person, like in a very bad situation. I can bounce myself back into something like positive. And, I feel like when, like whatever I have that, something that doesn’t work for me, I feel like I can take it, like switch it around, and make it into something else to help me out.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

When Katy was asked to describe herself, she was not only aware in how decisions could lead her down one path or another, she was also aware of how she would be seen by others based on those decisions she may make.

I would um, they probably would describe me depending on how I do. If I started hanging out with the wrong crowd. They'll probably be like "oh, she's a troublemaker, she doesn't focus on school", and stuff like that. But because I'm going to be doing great, they will say "she has really good grades, she understands what we're teaching, and that she does really good".

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Alyssa described herself making note of her behavior and her family as being distractors.

She also illustrated how she would balance those parts of her with her academic career.

She always has to have the last word (laughter). Uh, she can sometimes get distracted by family but then she tries, doesn't, she tries not to let, she tries to not let that affect her grades.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

The theme emerged as it did from these quotes, because as the girls keenly illustrate, they are aware of the challenge that the issue of behavior can be to them daily. However, they are also aware that there is more to them than just a few inconvenient incidents, and they want the world to also be aware of this.

Survey. Of course, the interview data only presents one-third of the information gleaned from the participants in this study. The girls responded to a survey which provided a more formal perspective of how these girls view themselves. I feel the themes I have discussed are also reflected within the results of the survey. For the survey item, "it will easy for me to learn new things," 66% of responses indicated that it was "never/sometimes true," and 83% responded "never/sometimes true" for the item, "learning will come easy to me." The survey responses indicated the participants were aware of what they needed for a successful transition; with 50% responding that it was "true a lot of the time/always true" that "I will meet the challenges of doing well in school." Again, 50% indicated that the it

was “true a lot of the time/always true,” for the item, “I will be academically ready to go back to school.” The respondents also illustrated the fact that many of them will not let the past ruin their chances of success, as it does not define who they are, or their future, with 50% of them optimistically indicating that “I will enjoy going to school” as “true a lot of the time/always true.”

Document analysis. Analysis of the accompanying documents revealed much information about the girls participating in this study. All six participants received special education services for an emotional disturbance and received special education services which included weekly behavior inclusion support provided by a certified special education teacher during their core instructional time. A common thread reported by teachers on all participants’ IEPs as an area of need, and an impact of disability, was in the areas of executive functioning (i.e. paying attention, off task-behavior, losing focus). The participants confirmed this, with all six girls specifically using the phrase “loses focus” and providing descriptions of their behavior in the classroom. They also described losing instructional time, missing opportunities for learning, and the consequences of failing to turn in assignments. However, all six participants’ teachers that reported strengths on their IEPs used the phrase, “a desire to learn,” describe them as willing to attempt a challenging lesson, and asking for help if needed.

All participants’ IEP transition section described their vision for the future which expressed a desire to attend college, with five participants specifically stating a field of interest that corresponded with what was shared in the interview. Moreover, as the girls have indicated that they are aware of their needs and have chosen to not let the past define

who they are as individuals, I believe the data that accompanies these girls from one school setting to the next will be utilized as tools for advocating for these girls rather than as a “warning” to future educators.

All of the girls are quite aware of how they act and how their actions may be perceived by others. Yet, they are not willing to let that limit their potential for growth beyond their current circumstances and their past. The themes of “learning does not come easy, but I know what can help” and “my behavior does not define me” are asserted by both the interview data and the information gained through the survey. The data from the document analysis also serves to drive home this point. Even though these girls have trouble in a traditional school setting and have a few trepidations at the prospect of returning to one, they are willing to do so, and put their best effort into the transition without letting the past get in their way.

Research Question 2: What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about teacher interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?

The second question of the study centered on the girls and their interactions with teachers. It is no surprise that most of these girls have indicated they have anticipated challenges and barriers to teacher interactions in the future. In conducting this study two themes made themselves readily apparent: “Relationships Matter” and “I have Goals.” The girls were very open about their feeling toward educators of theirs: past, present, and future. All participants expounded on the characteristics they would not like to see in a teacher.

Theme Three. Relationships matter; Marie and Jackie were critical of a teacher's temperament in the classroom, citing they would not want a teacher with a temper, or one that is prone to aggravating students. Antonia also mentioned a teacher's management of the classroom in addition to their general disposition.

Angry, I hate angry teachers, just so mean in the morning. Like always yelling at us you know? Like I don't know, a teacher always yelling because we didn't understand something. I don't like people yelling at me when I don't understand. So, like it's annoying so, like I just feel like they're angry all the time.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Yelling, pushing us around. Like pressing your buttons and making us mad.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

I don't want to see any teacher that they don't care about behavior, they don't care about what you do in the classroom. I should have a consequence for that. I don't want to see a teacher yelling and screaming and being mean, or trying to say thing, to like make you mad, or to make you say something back to them. Like, that is just mean.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

The other three participants were very aware of the way they did not want a teacher to interact with them personally.

Um, I would not want to see a teacher like always hard on me, or yelling at me on some things. I know it's going to happen, but I like a teacher that realizes sometimes I need a break. I would, I would want them to respect my boundaries. Yeah, I'm not just trying to get out of class, like sometimes I need breaks.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

Literally, like a teacher who cusses, bad teachers like that. Or, like a teacher that would like, like say I give up, I give

up, cause I don't understand what they are saying. They just don't care about you. They don't care if you get mad, they just don't care.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/2]

Um, being really rude, rolling your eyes at me. Closing the door in your face when you're about to walk in the room. Straight up rude and I don't like it.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/27]

As these answers are clearly colored by past events, I was curious as to how the participants would answer questions focused on their future interactions with teachers. Virtually all the participants indicated they felt teachers might treat them differently because they had been in foster care. When I probed them about how they might be treated differently, they indicated that teachers might be more caring, less harsh, and understanding of their needs. They truly feel that teachers would treat them with the appropriate respect they deserve. I asked participants how they thought teachers would treat them differently compared to the other students in the classroom. The participants responded:

I don't care cause, I feel like if they pick, like, I feel like if they knew about me being in foster care, they wouldn't pick on me, like not pick on me but, like treat me different than they treat the other kid.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

I feel like they would treat me different because like of course I'm a foster kid, and I feel that people see us as different. And know that we need more help because of the life settings that we've had back home or other things. I feel like yeah, they would, they'd understand about a break or they'd understand like I need a minute to myself, like you know I feel like they'd would understand, so they would treat me different.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

They might look at it cause like I know some people will look at it like, oh well she was in CPS, or what's up with this. I don't think they would, but I feel like they'll question it a little. That I was in CPS, it's just you know maybe on some things, they might be a little much easier, like much nicer or something. I mean I've been to public school so I know how they are, it's just going to be like a regular teacher when I tell them some things, how I am or like if I'm really soft about some things like uh, you know.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

I think so because of what my past and that I'm in CPS. Because I got abused and stuff like that, they'll probably be nicer and if they know, they can be like understanding.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Um, yeah, like I guess, well, because I am in foster care, I feel like people, teachers would like be sensitive towards me, but I want to be treated like everyone else.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

Speaking with the participants also revealed the characteristics they sought out in a teacher. Five of the six participants described positive qualities they'd like to see in a teacher, along with a clear desire to help them.

I feel like they would just constantly help me and be there, and like if they see that my grades are down they will like push me to do it.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

I like, like I would want a teacher who is honest, like, they want to help you and not lie. And a teacher that takes my accommodation sheet seriously. I feel like there are teachers that took it more serious than other teachers, cause I'd walk into class and they tell me to get a calculator and like, going to a new school, they might not take it so serious, they're like um, whatever you know. It's happened to me before, teachers not giving me my accommodations

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Teachers that are nice, that don't yell and not strict. Teachers, that, they want to help me. Um, yeah, they want to help and not make you mad.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

I would want to see a teacher like, like a good friend like Mr. C he is really, like Mr. C he's a really fun teacher, like um, like we have that connection where like the teacher, where they're nice and funny, they're not always so mean, but they can, they could connect with you. They are there to help you learn.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

Um, they're really nice and they understand what I'm going through and they help me go, help me understand like school and help me process things.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

What is of particular interest and illustrative of the girls' self-awareness, is that the girls are strongly aware of specific teacher characteristics they did not want to encounter in the future by vocalizing their feelings. They each describe an undesirable teacher's temperament as angry, yelling or intentionally upsetting students. However, they also reveal key desirable characteristics they seek out in teachers, and provide descriptions of qualities in which they would like to see a teacher exhibit. It is worth noting that the participants each describe a teacher who would be there to help them and be patient with their individual learning processes.

Theme Four. I have goals. I spoke with the students about what they viewed as their strengths both inside and outside of the classroom. They were eager to talk about that which interested them most, as well as the goals they have after graduating high-school. I felt this was an integral aspect to my study, since a theme that emerged from Again, with this theme, the participants' self-awareness seemed to serve as a benefit as they used the adversity with

which they had struggled in school and at home to inform and set future goals. When asked about their interests both in and out of the classroom, five of the six participants shared an academic class they enjoyed as well as expressing interests in sports, the arts, or both of these extracurricular activities as something they liked to do outside of academic classes.

Like, my social studies, I just love social studies.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

I'm good at basketball. Do you know what musically is? It's like a little app, the one where you like dance. I like to dance, and, I like to play softball.
[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Um, art. I like drawing and singing. I want to be an artist.
[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

Marie was asked to share what she was good at outside of school, she stated:

Soccer. I just never play it because I am in here. I hope to play on a team when I go to a regular school. My soccer ball needs to be aired up and it just sits underneath my desk. I play with it when I have no shoes on. I put my feet on it and roll it around.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

When asked about her favorite class she stated:

Uh, Science, 'cause I want to be a chemist.
[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Maddie, Katy and Alyssa shared their strengths both inside and outside the classroom.

Um, I'm a good listener. I like to help people a lot even if it's just sometimes them just asking for advice. I'm really good at science and I like math, but I like to do things out of school, like help with extra classes and I always ask my therapist to get me in something to help kids like kids younger than me.
[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

Basketball. I like to play basketball. Um, I like gymnastics too. I really like art. I like to express my thoughts in art, like through drawing and singing.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/13]

Oh, anything fine arts. I'm really good at math too. I am comfortable with singing and comprehending. I catch on pretty quick.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Um, I like to write, I'm good at reading (laughter) that's a good thing. Uh, I'm good at spelling. I'm good at sports. I'm good at sports.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

Speaking further with the participants revealed that although participants shared common goals (i.e., going to college, having some contact with family though looking slightly different), each young woman had shared a unique perspective on her future. Some shared how they want to help others who are in similar situations to what they have experienced. Three of the participants mentioned wanting to help others, by doing social work, or public service. Two participants mention they specifically want to study fine arts and one participant is unsure. When asked what she would like to do in the future, Antonia shared:

A cop. A Strategic Response Unit Sergeant. That's my dream, because I like their job. Like, I like how they bust down houses to get drug users.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

She indicated that a long-term goal was for her to be adopted, and belong to a family, and to prove the system wrong. She wants to prove that despite her circumstances, she is destined for a better life. When specifically asked about long-term goals, Antonia stated:

Um, get adopted, graduate, and go to college. Most people in foster care don't go to college, but me personally, I want to make a difference from people constantly talking about foster kids who say they don't go to college, they always screw up. I just want to make a difference and prove people wrong that it can happen.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

She concluded the conversation by stating:

Yeah, and also nobody in my family has been to college.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Marie also shared her plans for the future, and her desire to attend college.

Well, I want to go to school and I want to work in the field, like in a lab four or five years you know. And, then I want to go back to school and get my, um, masters and become a teacher. I want to teach high school students chemistry and IPC.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

More specifically, Marie indicated, while discussing her long-term goals, that she wants to attend college, reunite with her family, and have a family of her own.

Um, well, I know I'm going to go to college. I know I'm going to visit my family, and um, like finish college and finish. Like, you know, after like doing all that then, I feel like I'll have a family.

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Jackie was also asked to share both her short-term and long-term goals as well as what she would like to see for herself.

Um, stay in school. I want to go to a regular school and go to a foster home.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

She stated her desire to continue her education and career goals.

I want to go to college. I want to be an artist and I want to go art school.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

She goes on to state that she is not sure what type of art she would like pursue, as she enjoys all art: drawing, painting, pencil and sketching. She mentioned that she has used art as a coping mechanism when upset. Maddie shared her desire to attend college. When asked what she would like to do when she graduates from high school, she replied:

I want to go to college. In the future, I want to help kids, in a very like bad situation, like in very bad environments, so I want to help kids. Like you know, a girl power thing? Yeah, I want to help kids, girls.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/6]

Maddie previously shared that she feels a strength of hers is an ability to listen to others. She expresses her eagerness to use that skill to help others especially younger kids.

Um, I want to go help kids in like very bad situations like for mental health. Like really bad situations where they've seen a lot of shootings in their life and like seeing people get hurt. That's what I want. Where they really have like no hope left and they're like at their breaking point. And, just to help them lift up.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/6]

She feels that the support and encouragement she gets from her mother and therapist, as well as her life experiences can provide the insight and drive to help achieve her goal. This is captured in her quote:

My mom always tells me go for your dreams and push for it. And, she knows I can get there because of my pas. So, I feel like what I've seen, and see how my therapist is, like it's, it's something like I really want to do. But, most of all, I feel like I want to start studying because I already got two scholarships for Texas Excellence within Girl Empowerment. I know some background, like I'm studying it and everything.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/6]

Katy, who also shared a keen insight into a problem that persists in her family, stated the following when asked about what she wants for her future:

Um, I'm trying not to do drugs anymore, like that's in the past. I mean, yeah, it runs in my family and stuff like that, but like I'm not going to let that be a part of me. And, um, I'm trying, um, to focus on stuff. That's what I'm rooting for in my life. I want my future to not focus on bad things than have no future.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

She then mentioned how she might like to further her education, she stated:

I'm probably going to go to college. I want to study acting or singing. I would like to go to be a professional actress.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

She also expressed that she would like to go back home to her family.

I also want to go back home and then after that I'm going to college. Um, I'll probably stay about a year with them.

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

When Alyssa was asked about her short-term goals, she stated:

My goal is to complete college and uh that's really all and to get home.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

She was then asked about her long-term goals, to which she responded:

I'm aiming for college and I'm just not going to let people get in the way of that. Because I'm not going to be like my parents and have to drop out.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

She was then asked if she knew specifically what she wanted to go to college for and what she wanted to be. She responded simply:

Something in the medical field.
[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

Even though the participants find themselves in extraordinary circumstances that would be difficult for even those with the strongest resolve, they have goals that any typical student of their age may have: higher education, a family, and so forth. These girls also yearn to overcome their personal challenges as well, and do not deny the fact that it may difficult to do so; and yet, they remain resolved to reach their objectives.

Survey. The participants responded to the survey questions that correspond to the second research question two. As with the first research question themes, the themes that came from the second research question: “Relationships Matter,” and “I have Goals.” Half of the participants selected “true a lot of the time/always true,” for the item “teachers will treat me with respect.” Likewise, 50% percent responded “true a lot of the time/always true,” for the item “there will be a teacher or teachers that can help me in school.” For the third item that addressed research question two: “I will feel welcomed at school by my teachers,” 50% of the participants indicated that it was “true a lot of the time/always true.”

Document analysis. As with the survey and the interview data, I feel the themes “Relationships Matter and This is what I need, this is where I excel and I have goals” are expressed within the document analysis I conducted. The IEP student vision for each participant expressed the desire to attend college after graduating high-school. Five of the young ladies specifically stated a field of interest that corroborated what they had expressed in their interview with me. One participant was unsure of her career path, but still had plans for higher education. The teachers for all the participants also noted behavior strengths on

each of their IEPs, indicating that they typically have good relationships with teachers or staff members at the facility.

The themes that emerged from this research question once again exemplify the self-awareness and relatability exhibited by these young ladies. The theme of “relationships matter” is clearly illustrated by the girls voicing their opinions on the manner in which an effective teacher conducts themselves. Their trepidation at the prospect of returning to a traditional school setting is exemplified in their survey answers regarding this issue. Their documents also shed light upon their sometimes-troubled past interactions with educators. Despite the girls’ unease in returning to a more traditional school setting, they have shown that they are still willing to grow beyond their circumstances. The theme of “I have goals” is repeatedly reinforced in the data collected from their survey, document analysis, and interview questions.

Research Question 3: What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about peer interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?

The final research question dealt with the anticipated challenges and barriers to peer interactions these girls may face when transitioning back to a traditional school setting. All six participants acknowledged that past interactions with peers may not have been healthy, and therefore all six expressed concerns about reverting to their past behaviors as a result of peer interactions. The theme to emerge from this question was “Peers are a Concern, I have to Rely on Myself.”

Theme Five. Peers are a concern, I have to rely on myself. Five of the six girls in the study made it a clear point to say they would have to rely on themselves for success in transitioning rather than peers. Since peers present such a challenging aspect to all six of these girls' lives, future peer interactions are an ever-looming source of anxiety for them. Their main concern being a return to bad habits, and self-destructive routines of old. Five of the six participants expressed that they would need to rely on themselves to make better decisions. Participants were asked if they felt there would be friends that would support them doing well in school. While all the girls expressed concern with interacting with peers in the future, Maddie and Katy, were slightly more optimistic about making and relying upon friends.

Um, probably like, friends and like things like that. Finding the wrong friends. Well, most of the time they, like they're with you to like fight and like do drugs and like just bad stuff. I feel like if I don't do right, I will come to a place like here again.

[Antonia, Individual Interview, 8/22]

Um, no you're not going to be able to rely on all of your friends. I don't trust people. I feel like, that I have control myself. I feel like, like, I have I need to stay away from the kids that like are late every day. I'd be like dude you're not my friend. I hate when people are like hey what's up friend, like that just don't make sense, like I'm not your friend, why are you talking to me? So, I feel like kids that are just stupid and do just stupid stuff in school like what's the point of it

[Marie, Individual Interview, 8/23]

Um, I'm worried about friends that might not be good for me. I might not pick good friends and they might not be good, I don't know, it depends if they're like good or bad, like breaking into houses, smoking, skipping school, and stuff like that.

[Jackie, Individual Interview, 9/5]

I'm not going to say friends because they are not my friends. They are acquaintances. I am afraid I would be worse than before I came here, but I feel like I've done really good in like trying to find a way not to do like some of those things anymore. I don't know I have to see what happens and hope that I learned to be better.

[Alyssa, Individual Interview, 9/27]

Katy stated that she would try to make some friends that will be more of a positive influence on her than the friends she would gravitate toward in the past.

I'm going to try to make friends that are not negative or that will be able to support me in school. I'm going to try to focus more in school because, when I'm in a public school, like I kind of focus on other things that are not about school. Like what my friends are doing, like I'm misbehaving myself. I'm not going to go towards them, cause usually when I go towards them they're usually mean, like I choose mean people"

[Katy, Individual Interview, 9/26]

Maddie, on the other hand, acknowledged some concern, but expressed that she would rely on herself as well as a small number of friends to make better decisions.

Like, sometimes, I might be in the wrong crowd. I mean my friends can sometimes be really negative, and sometimes there's not a nice kid and not someone to go to for advice. I feel like I really have less friends but I'm okay with that because I've learned to be okay with that. I feel like I'll make better decisions because I've been waiting for a long time to get out of here and put like what I learned into practice to like in a real school and all that so I feel like I'll be good at that.

[Maddie, Individual Interview, 9/6]

Unfortunately, as illuminated by the data above, these girls have not had many peer relationships that serve to fill them with confidence in future peer relations. They are aware

that the wrong type of friends can lead them astray and therefore believe they may only be able to rely upon themselves.

Survey. Results from the survey items that fell under research question three, also illustrated the theme: “Peers are a concern, I have to rely on myself.” For the item “I will be able to rely on my friend for support,” 66% of the respondents indicated that was “never true/sometimes true.” Half of the participants denoted that it was “never true/sometimes true” that “I will be able to rely on my friends to stay out of trouble.” For the item “I will choose friends who make good decisions,” 50% also indicated that it was “never true/sometimes true.”

Document analysis. The theme of “Peers are a concern, I have to rely on myself” is also supported by the document analysis I conducted. The admission assessments for all six participants stated various reasons for their circumstances leading to the placement referral. In all six participants’ referrals, there were documented school problems citing poor interactions with peers. In reviewing IEP document’s behavior areas of need and impact of disability, teachers document that they will engage in off-task behavior by engaging negatively with other students. However, behavior was also strength that was noted in all six IEPs, as was the student’s ability to self-advocate by either asking to take a break when becoming aggravated or asking for assistance from campus staff.

Peer relationships are an area of trouble for most of the girls in the study. Poor past relationships with peers have seemed to influence the girls’ general attitude toward future relationships with peers. As the theme illustrates, the girls mostly feel as if they will not be

able to rely on peers for support, and will have to rely on themselves. Survey answers support this, and analysis of documents confirm their past troubles with peers.

Conclusion

This chapter presents the overall data that was collected through interviews, surveys, and document analysis. However, while the preceding chapter presented the data with respect to each participant, this chapter presents the data according to the research question answered by that data respectively. This chapter addresses the themes that came about as a result of the researcher's coding of respondent's answers to various interview questions that corresponded with each of the three research questions.

For the first research question, the themes of "learning does not come easy, but I know what I can do" and "My behavior does not define me" emerged from the answers respondents gave during the interview process. Subsequently these themes were substantiated by the respondents' survey answers and document analysis.

The themes of "Relationships matter" and "I have goals" emerged from the line of questioning corresponding with the second research question. The survey results and the document analysis, also corroborated these themes.

"Peers are a concern, I have to rely on myself" was the theme that emerged from the third research question's interview data. Likewise, just as with the first and second research question, the data results from the survey and document analysis corroborated with this theme.

The qualitative nature of this study provided the researcher with a large measure of information, which had to be triangulated according to participant and then examined

through a more complete and holistic lens by considering the themes that emerged in the data that had been collected. With research of a qualitative nature, there is an element of narrative that emerges as data is presented. It is the job of the researcher to provide as much description of the research setting, participants, evidence and circumstances that led to the conclusions drawn by the researcher. This aids the researcher both in analysis of data and presentation of that data to the reader by providing a more complete picture of how the data emerges as the study progresses. It is the hope of the researcher to have provided the reader with a clear and concise presentation of the data obtained through this study, as well as to tackle a portion of the gap in information not addressed in the current available literature.

Chapter 6

The purpose of this study is to examine Hispanic females with disabilities, who are detained in a short term Residential Treatment Facility (RTC), and their anticipated challenges and barriers to transitioning back into a school setting. The preceding chapters shed light upon and discussed a lack of data concerning a very present and real portion of the juvenile population. There is a need for illumination regarding Hispanic females with disabilities, since there did not seem to be any extensive literature delving into this subset of the general population. The literature suggest that transitional services can help juveniles successfully reintegrate, however more research is needed to understand the perceptions Hispanic females with disabilities hold for their own transition and the challenges and barriers that exist. Their story needed their needed to be told. It is with that goal in mind that the researcher set out to further explore the subject. This study focused on the challenges and barriers the participants had regarding academic experiences, teacher interactions, and peer influences. The participants in this study shared their thoughts and feelings concerning challenges and barriers they anticipated in transitioning from their current residential treatment center (RTC) to a more traditional school setting. The preceding chapters presented a variety of data concerning six middle school-age Hispanic females with disabilities who were residing in a RTC. Interviews were conducted with the study's participants, a survey was administered and a document analysis was performed by delving into the educational records of each of the participants.

This study was framed through the lenses of both self-determination theory (SDT) and the deficit thinking model. SDT maintains that individuals search for personal well-being

and growth with the caveat that certain needs must be satisfied if individuals are to develop to their fullest potential; autonomy, competence and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Autonomy is defined as having a sense of self-regulation and control over the events of one's life; competence is defined as a feeling of being capable and competent in at least some areas of functioning; and relatedness is defined as a feeling of deep connectedness to the world in which the individual lives (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). SDT maintains certain evolved psychological needs must be satisfied, through certain narratives. The girls in this study are saying what these needs are and thus working out how to satisfy those needs. This awareness indicates a great deal of self-awareness and self-determination. The deficit-thinking model states that students who fail in school do so as a result of internal deficits or deficiencies (Valencia, 1997, 2010). Allegedly, these deficits manifest because of limited intellectual abilities, linguistic shortcomings and lack of motivation of the student (Valencia, 1997, 2010). Two characteristics of deficit thinking that are explored in this study are educability and blaming the victim. Educability describes behavior in pathological and dysfunctional ways that refers to deficiencies, limitations, and shortcomings in individuals, families and culture (Valencia, 1997, 2010). Blaming the victim is a tendency to place blame on the victim, in this case the youth, rather than the schools and community, the youths are returning (Valencia, 1997, 2010).

The chapter discusses the themes that support both the previous research found in the available literature, as well as the findings generated from this study. The conclusions of this study are organized according to research question, followed by the limitations of this study, implications for practice and finally future research.

Themes

Research question 1: *What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about academic experiences for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?*

The first research question focused on the girls' perceptions of challenges and barriers regarding transitioning from a RTC to a more traditional school setting. Literature sources on youth offenders' perceptions of the influences and barriers to youths, and their successful transitions back to school settings have reported that youths express little or no confidence in their academic ability and skills (Dawes, 2011; Fields & Abrams, 2010). This was also true in the study's findings; participants felt a lack of competence in their overall academic experience. They often cited teachers as a contributing factor. Furthermore, the participants across cases expressed a lack of competence and often categorized themselves negatively, describing themselves in negative terms. While conducting this study, the researcher discovered the findings both describe, and confirm previous research regarding the influences or challenges/barriers to transition regarding academic ability. Like previous studies, the youths that were examined had been exposed to various risk factors such as poverty, abuse, and involvement with the law; and like the previous studies, these young women felt there were significant challenges and barriers to their transition from an RTC back to a traditional school setting. Also, similarly to the youths in the other studies, the girls in this study mentioned the same sources of those challenges: academic performance, behavior, and relationships with teachers and peers.

However, while findings did support previous research, and participants shared their lack of confidence in their academic ability, what makes the study unique is that all six participants were able to reflect upon and share their personal experiences. The interview process was laden with the girls' references to their past such as: Jackie's incident with Mrs. L which ended in an altercation, or Alyssa's lack of structure in her household. They were able to express how they view themselves as students, and what they perceive as their needs to facilitate a successful transition, with many of the girls outlining what they would need from a teacher and their environment to be successful.

This study did not simply turn its subjects into statistics for research. The qualitative nature allowed for the perspectives of the participants to be truly represented, and the protocol of the data collection permitted a more complete picture of the circumstances in which the participants find themselves, and the feelings they harbored toward the school setting, academics and important aspects of their life. This more holistic method of data collection also allowed for more authenticity in the narratives being told. These girls represent a sample of a population and the girls are all in very similar circumstances in terms of age, disability, backgrounded; however, this study sought to illuminate their individuality. For example, when speaking about future academic experiences, the participants alluded to feeling competent when transitioning back to a school setting by identifying what was needed in order to help them succeed academically. Alyssa needed less distractions in a classroom setting; Marie and a number of other girls mentioned having active support from the teacher; and Katy could site an incident that made her aware of her need for a teacher to teach at a pace with which she could keep up.

For Katy, Antonia, Alyssa, Marie, Maddie and Jackie, behavior is not just the product of stressors that occur during the day; the issue of proper behavior can be a stressor in itself. Marshall et al. (2012), found youth categorized themselves or other youth negatively, using terms such as: probation violator, drug user, troublemaker, and drop out. In this study, the girls were prone to using similar terms to describe themselves. Participants in this study also categorized themselves negatively; when asked to describe their past behaviors in school they used terms such as: “misbehaving,” “kicked out of class,” “never did class work ” “disrespectful,” “bad”.

However, despite the behavioral mishaps of the past, all participants displayed aspects of self-determination with confidence and possessed a desire to do better with their futures. More significant in the findings, was the level of understandings these girls had of themselves; through their responses, they indicated a level of awareness regarding their behavior not being tied to their past and determining if they were able to succeed in their future. The girls were not going to let their past dictate their futures. I believe that this, in itself, is a hallmark of SDT, which seeks to present a challenge to anyone examining members of a group. This theory aids in reducing the tendency for one person to see someone else as something different simply because they belong to a certain group. One can look at the girls in this study and assume a myriad of things based on any one factor. One may look at their history of abuse and assume, likewise, they could look at their academic troubles, or their poverty, or their parents and assume an entire narrative based on those factors without so much as a glance at who these girls are. When looking at this study through the lens of SDT we are challenged to remove the labels placed on these individuals

and look at them as human beings with identities and lives that extend far beyond the confines of an academic study.

Research question 2: *What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about teacher interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?*

An undeniable fact is that relationships matter and are an integral piece to transition. These findings describe and verify Dawes' (2011) and Baltodono's (2005), research on the perceptions of transition for youth from juvenile justice systems back to community settings; citing negative teacher reactions and unwelcoming schools. As mentioned, these girls are very aware of themselves, and their situation; it was shared in their interviews that they anticipated challenges in their future dealings with teachers. These feelings of trepidation obviously influenced by their past interactions with educators.

The first theme that arose from research question two centered around the issue of relationships, specifically the relationship a student has with their educator. The girls were quick to describe what they did not want to see in an educator. Indeed, yelling, impatience, and lack of compassion are things no one wants to see in a teacher, and these young women are very much aware of that. Despite their immediate response to a question about educators skewing toward the negative, after some further probing, they gave examples of what a good teacher in their eyes would look like. Maddie and Marie mentioned teachers that were understanding of their situation and aware of their academic accommodations. Alyssa, Katy, Jackie and Antonia expressed a desire to see a teacher that is willing to help them in their academic pursuits. This reinforces the previous theme of "learning does not come easy, but

I know what can help” from research question one. The girls know what they want to see in a teacher that will help them in their learning process.

Another key finding significance that lends itself to discussion is how participants felt about their future interactions. While all the students during the study were legally placed in Child Protective Services (CPS), the importance of teachers knowing their backgrounds was important to them and their success. This was captured in responses of Marie, Maddie, and Alyssa; as they felt that teachers would treat them different because they were in foster care when they returned and the treatment they described was understanding, easier, and less harsh.

Another key finding when discussing teacher interactions deals with student interest, desires, and futures goals. The second theme that emerged from this research question allowed the girls to illustrate that they have goals that can be seen as normal for just about any other student living today. The goals were as varied as the girls themselves; some wanted to pursue higher education and careers, while others simply wanted to be a part of a cohesive family unit. No matter the aim of the individual’s goal, the importance lies within the fact that these girls, who have endured so much, still have healthy goals. I felt that it was especially poignant that some girls wanted to pursue careers that they had already had experience with on the receiving end: Maddie mentioned wanting to help kids in bad situations, Marie aspires to be a teacher, and Antonia mentioned a career in law enforcement.

The findings of this study describe areas in which the girls expressed a great deal of interest and desire. This interest should be recognized as an important component to

academic and future goals. The findings of the study show that the girls were highly motivated and described areas of interest in which teachers could build upon. Furthermore, the participants shared their desires for future goals, academic and non-academic classes in which they felt they excelled, and desires to attend college. These findings emphasized the impact teachers' have on a student's sense of relatedness in the classroom and success. An even more salient finding is the link between teacher relationships, student engagement, a sense of belonging and student and the impact it holds on student behavior, academic success and future goals.

Research question 3: *What are the anticipated challenges and barriers about peer interactions for middle school Hispanic females with disabilities in a residential treatment center transitioning back into a school setting?*

The findings of this research revealed participants' expressed concerns regarding future peer interactions, and what the implications of those interactions could mean for their success in transitioning. The findings of this study describe, and corroborate previous research that identified peer influences as a barrier to youths' successful transition back to the community, and school setting. Negative effects can occur when youths find themselves returning to old peer groups which usually see them confronting old friends and their influences (Abrams, 2006; Fields, 2010; Unruh et al, 2009). Incidentally, these young ladies realized early on that for their transition to be a success, they would have no choice other than to rely on themselves to make decisions that are good for them.

Among the girls, Katy was the outlier in her comparatively optimistic view toward making friends. She mentioned being able to make friends and her ability to rely on both

herself and a small number of friends. Maddie mentioned wanting to stay clear of a bad crowd of negative friends. The word “negative” was also noted among the responses of Jackie, Alyssa, and Antonia. Marie made a point of saying she could only trust herself. While many can call a need for friends healthy, the unfortunate reality for most of these girls is that their friends and social lives have not been healthy. They are able to recognize this aspect of their life and realize that they must rely on themselves more than others.

In effect, these girls know that they must sever ties with most of their former friends to have a positive transition. Still, others were aware of the types of friends they were attracted to, and resolved to let good people come to them rather than flock to those that encourage negative behaviors and actions. The girls are well aware of the need to overcome the obstacles that have presented themselves as challenges in their past so they can move on and lead better lives.

The findings of this study show the resiliency with which these girls will approach the barriers and challenges regarding peer interactions, goals, relationships, academic needs and their behavior. The study also reveals a significant level of autonomy and self-awareness exhibited by these girls’ answers and attitudes. As explicitly stated as the theme “my behavior does not define me,” these girls implicitly state time and again that ultimately none of the traits discussed in this study serve to give them definition either. These girls define themselves. The girls are the sum of their parts, and most illustrative of SDT in action, they will determine their own course with confidence. This coupled with the qualities demonstrated by the girls in this study is essential to a successful transition to a traditional school setting.

Limitations

As with all research, limitations exist within the confines of this particular study's scope. This study dealt with the perceptions and personal experiences of the six female Hispanic girls with disabilities residing in a RTC who chose to participate. The findings of this study are meant to serve as a guide for future studies about Hispanic females with disabilities, and their perspectives regarding challenges and barriers to transition. It is important to mention the fact that the methods of data collection used in conducting this study could have impacted the results. It is a researcher's duty to provide transparent and trustworthy data by providing an account of how the study unfolded. The study could have been more extensive; however, the researcher chose these six girls to be the participants. Recruitment of participants was designed using purposive sampling, and specifically identified six Hispanic females, between the ages of 12 and 17 years of age, who were receiving special education services for emotional disturbance (ED) and/or a learning disability (LD) and were placed in a RTC located in Central Texas. The method in which participants were chosen does not imply that other girls, younger or older, with other disabilities, in other ethnic groups, located in other states, or in different placement within the juvenile justice system experience similar or dissimilar challenges.

Furthermore, as required by the campus administrator over the matter of external research, participants meeting requirements for the study were identified for the study. Therefore, there are no assurances that all students had an opportunity to be chosen for participation. Throughout the study, the researcher tried to remain cognizant of ways to increase and maintain the credibility of data collection. For example, the researcher

acknowledged the comfort level in the first interview and contrasted that experience with the researcher's state of comfort during the last interview. The researcher also acknowledged the status of the insider versus the outsider; the participants of this study were walking into a new experience and despite the novice level of knowledge in conducting this type of study, the participant's saw the researcher as an authority figure whom they could assume knew what she was doing. Rapport was established in the first meeting, and the researcher sought ways to accommodate the participants' various needs in order to address social power status.

This study is looked at through the lenses of deficit thinking and SDT which have both been discussed. However, like many theories, there are flaws and limitations that come inherent to SDT, especially dealing with a young population who are housed in a facility where much of their autonomy cannot be exercised as much as they would prefer. Some of the participants expressed interests in certain classes like art and recreational activities like sports, however, these are not currently available to them due to the nature of their placement. SDT also makes the assumption that people will learn what their needs are, however there is no guarantee that they will obtain that which they feel they require. For example, Antonia and Katy mentioned needing a family, and for some of them that may not be a viable option any time soon. However, the researcher noted, their ideas of what they require can and will likely change as time passes. Deficit thinking, on the other hand, is rife with limitations on how to view aspects of any given subject. In this case deficit thinking applies to any aspect of thought that takes away agency from the participants in this study. As mentioned before, there are assumptions that people make based on the parts of a whole rather than taking in the entire picture and getting to know individuals. The researcher had to remain aware of my

own assumptions based on any one or number of details, those reading this study must also assert that same awareness as well.

The ultimate goal in conducting the interviews for these case studies was to hear the participants' authentic voices as opposed to what they felt the researcher, wanted to hear from them. The researcher clearly communicated to the best of their ability that the participants could share their true feelings and perceptions. Moreover, while the researcher does not feel these factors played into the authenticity of what participants shared, it is worth noting that some interviews conducted with the participants were shorter than others. This could have been due to interview protocol design, the mood of the student on the particular day of the interview, or the interviewer not taking the appropriate steps to procure an appropriate interview space.

Another possible limitation to this study is the interpretation of the data by the researcher. It was noted by the researcher coming into the study an awareness of more than a few similarities between the girls who would be participating. Like the girls, the researcher suffered abuse, was suicidal, and had trouble in school both on an academic and behavioral level. Additionally, she was mistrustful of teachers and sought out teachers whom she felt genuinely cared about her progress. When hearing their stories, the researcher recognized elements of her own. Initially, it was thought that researcher had to distance herself almost completely from her own experiences to maintain professionalism; however, realized that these struggles were not something to disregard. The researcher's own background allowed her to empathize more with the stories each young lady related allowed a true immersion into the data.

However, the researcher was careful to maintain professional, aware of the study's purpose, and thoughtful of her positionality as a Hispanic female, who struggled with teacher interactions in the past, and had previous experiences with the criminal justice system. The researcher addressed these limitations by being mindful of personal thinking, recording thoughts and reactions throughout this study and documenting them in a journal. The researcher tried to avoid making interpretations of participants' thoughts, for example, when girls discussed future goals, one participant wanted to be a police officer to address problems caused by drugs. A note was that she may have chosen the law enforcement field to help others that were in situations similar to what she had experienced as a way to gain control of what she could not. However, rather than jumping to conclusions, the researcher remained mindful of the communication process, engaged in active listening and created a space the participants' voices to be heard, acknowledged and shared.

Implications for Practice

Academics is the first and, arguably, the most important area that can be affected regarding implications of this study. One of the key implications of this study highlights the importance of youth needing to feel academically competent as they transition from RTC back to a school setting. The girls continuously exhibited a need not just to learn, but to feel they understood the concepts they were learning about. This study also works to shift the tendency to blame the victim for their circumstances. There is an inclination by some to assume the reasons the students struggle with their transition are a result of deficiencies: low academic achievement, being in foster care, a history of sexual abuse, and the label "special education." As we can see, these girls were not in control of their circumstances and therefore

should not be target for blame or further punishment. Some ways educators can avoid pitfalls when working with students under these circumstances is actively developing and fostering a sense of community, and competence within the students left in their care. In turn this fosters a sense of community and works to eliminate deficit approaches to education. Valencia (2010) suggested building a learning community where conscientious effort is made to encourage all students to become members. Furthermore, instilling a sense of competence in all students, deficit thinking instills the opposite notion, the democratic educator must believe that all students can succeed and consciously make the effort to build that feeling in his/her students (Valencia, 2010). Teachers must be prepared to teach to diverse populations of students and take into account the different experiences and academic needs of all students (Banks et al., 2005). This includes students with an ED, LD or a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students.

Childhood emotional, physical, and or sexual trauma is a common experience (Cavanaugh, 2016). Moreover, children and youth who have experienced foster care often experience complex developmental trauma (Purvis, Cross, Dansereau & Parris, 2013). Given that all the participants in this study experienced sexual abuse or assault and were all in the foster care system, an enormous implication of study is the tremendous need for teachers to understand the impact of trauma and impact on student learning. One approach is through Trauma Based Relational Intervention (TBRI), interventions consisting of relationship-based approaches to work with youth and trauma through loving, stable relationships, by nurturing caregivers (Purvis et al., 2013).

Yet another implication due to the girls having a good understanding of themselves, as indicated through their responses, was that they felt capable and competent in understanding how they functioned in an academic setting. They were able to identify what was needed in order to help them to succeed academically as they provided concrete examples of how teachers could accommodate their teaching. Thus, teachers must be aware of their current classroom methods, and how those methods affect their audience which is most likely comprised of a variety of students. One way to achieve this would be for teachers to become more culturally proficient in their teaching. As a culturally proficient instructor, one understands, appreciates, and respects the various cultures represented in the classroom, and tries to proactively design instructional strategies that include all learners (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, Terrell, 2012). Moreover, teachers should take into account the perspectives of different groups, create connections for their students, and build upon their students' strengths (Au, 1980; Banks, 1991; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996).

However, institutional leadership is a powerful factor in the recognition and advancement in school success (Valencia, 2010). Thus, teachers cannot alone stand the burden of managing the failure or success of their students, the whole approach to learning and behavior must be look at and scrutinized. Ultimately, the school and the school systems in which the students return must rise to the responsibility of their undertaking. School organization, instruction, and curriculum they offer, to whom, what teachers are assigned to which populations of students, and how teachers are encouraged to collaborate matter for the quality of opportunity different students receive (Banks et al., 2005). Additionally, principals need to be aware of their own biases and learn to lead schools that are diverse along SES and

racial lines (Valencia, 2010). If they are not aware of how they approach these complex subjects, their personal feelings about student achievement can trickle down and infect their school's entire culture. Leadership, whether at the school level (such as a principal) or at the district level (like a superintendent), directly influences the level of deficit thinking that can trickle down to the micro-level, teachers and the students.

Another implication of study emphasizes the importance of teacher-student relationships and the need for youths to feel related to their settings. Children who feel a sense of belonging in school are less likely to have discipline problems, and can promote student engagement that is linked to learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Nieto, 1999). A further implication is the important role teachers play in facilitating successful transitions from RTC back to a school setting. It could be easy to assume that teachers just play a role in education that is relegated to classroom subjects, yet teachers' roles in the lives of their students is integral to the development of all students. Furthermore, if students are to feel competent and in control, and if teachers are to develop strategies that are appropriate to their needs, teachers need to learn about each of their students and respect their individual differences (LaPage et al., 2005).

In recent years, policy makers have been more invested in the education of teachers and their level of preparation than they have been in the past. However, reform efforts are not doing enough to address the social aspects of the teaching profession (Fullan, 1991). Nance, (2016) argued that for such progress to be made, it must be implemented in a way where lawmakers could aid educators by implementing wider ranging policies that help students and teachers grow emotionally and socially through social and emotional learning

programs and training. Policy implementation may be the only way for true change to occur, however, policies do not just have to be implemented by laws. Policies can be executed on a school/facility level. Facility policies can work if those involved are invested. The North Carolina Work and Community Transition Youth Offenders Program was successful in its aims to give their residents a sense of purpose as students and help them change their self-image from that of “inmate” to “student” (Urrieta, Martin & Robinson, 2011). Other changes to existing policies could have a positive impact upon the general school environment. The Zero Tolerance policy that most schools have in place often penalize and indeed target children with disabilities who happen to be minorities. Zero Tolerance policies often strengthen the school-to-prison pipeline, as these policies give a direct route to the juvenile justice system, often for minor offenses (Moterastelli, 2017). Harsh discipline policies have had a detrimental effect on overall school safety and academic performance (Castillo, 2014). Alternatives to these policies do exist. Restorative justice measures aim to meet the needs of the entire school community and provide a way for students to restore their role in the community, as opposed to being ejected from the school environment (Castillo, 2014).

The consequences of failing to build relationships can have huge ramifications. When teachers fail to build relationships with their students, they are more likely to place ability or inability to learn on their students based on predispositions such as race, ethnicity, and social class, therefore contributing to their students’ academic success or failure (Irvine, 1990; Kaplan, Gheen & Midgley, 2002). One way teachers can achieve this is by emphasizing students’ strengths and realize they are a positive part of the learning environment, experience, and diverse perspective (Banks et al., 2005).

A salient implication related to the relationships between students and their teachers is the inherent need for teachers know and understand their students. The participants expressed a desire to do well in school, described themselves using positive terms, and had goals for themselves in the future. For these positive outcomes to come about, teachers need to strive toward a classroom environment that is welcoming and accepting of the perceived differences between students. The participants each voiced a goal that involved attending college, and the researcher has no doubt that the students' positive relationships with their teachers played a part in that ambition.

Another implication for practice illustrated by this study was the need for teachers to know their students' backgrounds. Participants felt that if a teacher knew who they were, teachers would treat them differently, less harsh, and with more understanding. Teachers need to make decisions that influence what their students learn; students, in turn are influenced by the teachers' intentions for them, and the teachers' vision of student learning (Hammond et al., 2005). Teachers should not be influenced by stereotypes, assumptions, or belief systems of other cultural groups (Nuri-Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2012). Because of this massive responsibility held by teachers, they must be careful to not fall prey to unproductive attitudes and practices that only serve to dismantle the learning processes of the students in their charge. Valenica (2010) stated that, through successful leadership practices, principals can utilize practices to help teachers avoid and dismantle deficit thinking. For example, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) developed the construct of the equity trap to train school leaders to be successful in promoting school success in racially diverse schools. Equity traps are assumptions made by educators regarding students of color and

their ability to be successful in school (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004). McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) identified that teachers attributed their students' lack of success to endogenous factors such as poor motivation resulting from being a part of an inadequate culture. In fact, McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) provided strategies leaders can implement with teachers to eliminate deficit thinking as an equity trap: (a) allowing teachers to know their students and families via "neighborhood walks to help establish teacher-parent rapport; (b) conducting oral histories to learn about each other, and; (c) establishing three-way conferencing to include the student, his/her family member, and the teacher. Teachers and students who work together in supportive communities can promote higher levels of self-understanding, commitment, performance, and belongingness (Sergiovanni, 1994).

The girls revealed a need for high a high level of autonomy and self-awareness. Autonomy refers to the experience of choice and psychological freedom with regard to study activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sierens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, Soenens, Douchy, 2009). Thus, autonomy supportive teaching involves behaviors that promote students' tendency to engage in learning because they value an activity or find it interesting (Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). For example, students need to develop friendships to facilitate the acquisition of interpersonal skills to help them with future social success, and emotional well-being. Autonomy-supportive teachers acknowledge students' frames of reference; identify and nurture their needs, interests, and preferences; provide optimal challenges; highlight meaningful learning goals; and present interesting, relevant, and enriching activities (Assor et al., 2002; Black & Deci 2000; Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010; Ryan & Connell, 1989).

The girls demonstrated an awareness of how they prefer to learn and the methods that work best when teaching them. A teacher's approach to teaching of a given topic or body of content influences the curriculum that the students experience (Hammond et al., 2005). Therefore, teachers need to understand the interrelationships between what they teach, how they organize the material, and the overall classroom environment.

The last implication of study deals with peer influences. There is a significant importance placed on the girls' ability to make contact with positive friends in order for their transitions to be successful. Previous research identified peer influences as a barrier to youth's successful transition back to the community and school setting (Abrams, 2006; Fields, 2010; Sander et al., 2010; Unruh et al., 2009). Indeed, the participants of this study stated they were concerned with meeting up with old friends, the implication being that contact with old friends can lead to an unsuccessful transition. Research show that, people with friends are more likely to have a reassurance of their own value, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for social integration and communication (Thompson, Grace & Cohen, 2001). Moreover, reciprocal and meaningful peer relationships in adolescence can result in positive academic outcomes, such as school engagement, and positive social-emotional outcomes (Liem & Martin, 2011). The girls in this study have demonstrated that they have no desire to return to a RTC or any similar environment. Given the awareness of their circumstances and their reaction to their environment and the people therein, these girls ultimately know that it up to them to make decisions that will be in their best interest, whether those decisions concern academics, teacher relationships, or peer influences

Future Research

The goal of research is to gather data that can be used by those in any number of fields requiring efficient and reliable data. Students in this study shared their challenges and barriers to transitions based on their individual shared narratives. The data provided was then cross-analyzed. While this study is an effective glimpse into this often-overlooked population, I do feel that the study could be broadened provide a greater scope. While much of the available research has focused mainly on males, more and larger studies should be conducted to see if data results hold true with other populations (e.g., females, other ethnicities, students with and without disabilities). Future researchers may wish to increase the number of participants. In addition, number of survey items and the scope of information could be increased, which may provide wider-reaching data. From the results of this research and the demographics of the population we have learned some of what youth perceive as challenges. To expand the research, future researchers could focus on what teachers perceive as challenges when receiving students from RTCs or other similar places. Furthermore, they could address the question of how teachers and schools accommodate students who are coming in or returning from juvenile justice facilities. Expanding the research to include educational institutions could illuminate any faults in the culture of the classroom or the school at large. Doing this would paint a larger, clearer picture of the challenges and barriers to a successful education that affect all involved in the educational process.

Significance

While there are limitations to this study, it is important to note that findings from this study both describe and confirm the research that has come before. Although corroborating

the previous research, this study also adds to the overall conversation by providing the unique perspectives of the youths, gathered by the in-depth approach taken by the researcher. It was my responsibility as the researcher to view the results of this study through a deconstructed lens of deficit thinking, which would no doubt be an issue as these participants shared the traumatic experiences of their past, and what they felt was needed to overcome obstacles. Few studies have included an in-depth perspective of youths and how they view their situations. This is especially rare for situations where trauma is involved; this study is unique in the fact that it is entirely informed by the ever-looming specter of trauma. The girls have troubling past experiences, and personally, I as the researcher had to process the information through my own traumatic experiences.

However, while the past experiences of the girls contribute to the discussions brought up by the research questions, they also serve to provide new avenues for expanded research, and perhaps, more importantly, they provide hope to the abused, illuminate the uninformed, and enlighten those who would dismiss those youths in similar circumstances. As mentioned previously, there are many ways to reduce the girls of this study to any one of a set of common denominators. However, this study provides a glimpse into the experiences of these girls as individuals who just so happen to find themselves in atypical circumstances. These girls demonstrated a sense of self-determination, defiance of stereotypes that could be applied to them, ambition toward their goals, and the importance that an educator plays in the growth of an individual. Extraordinarily, the girls provide for us a model of an educator that can reach them, an educator who is authentic, facilitates academic progress and cares for

the students left in their charge. This study provides a wealth of information with wide ranging scope and implications.

This research was a part of my life for quite some time. There were many nights when I went to bed exhausted, because I had been immersed in the processes that went into this study. Initially, I had seen a need for research to be done with this population and I knew I could be the one to do it. However, after learning about these girls, gaining their trust, and earning their respect, I feel that this research is so much more than a study. This was a look at six girls: Katy, Antonia, Alyssa, Marie, Maddie and Jackie; these six girls were able to tell a story that in ways went against the assumptions some may have about their lives. This was a counter-narrative to those who look at children in similar circumstances and make assumptions based on some detail that, while significant, does not tell the entire story. The participants in this study were able to tell their story and in turn offer a glimpse into the lives of other young women in similar circumstances. For that, we should thank them.

Appendix A

1. How old are you?
2. What is the last grade you completed?
3. What is the last school you attended?
4. Can you tell me a little about the last school you were at? (Probes: Where was it located? How big was it?)
5. Can you tell me about whether or not you liked the school? (Probes: Why? What specifically did you like and dislike?)
6. How were you doing grade-wise at school?
7. How about behavior-wise? (Probes: Can you provide examples?)
8. How do you think teachers in your last school setting or school before here would describe you? (Probes: A good student? Not a good student? Teachers liked you?)
9. How would you describe yourself as a student during this time when you were in school?
10. In general what were teachers like at school?
11. 10a. Describe if you can, a favorite teacher. (What about them did you particularly like? Do you think having a favorite teacher helped?)
12. 10b. Can you describe a teacher you did not like. (What about them did you particularly not like?)
13. Can you tell me or do you remember if teachers treated you different at school? (Probes: Administrators? Counselors? Peers? Can you describe?)
14. Is school important to you? (Probes: Why? Why not?)
15. How do you feel about your current school?
16. How do you think teachers in this setting would describe you? (Probes: A good student? Not a good student? Teachers like you?)

17. Can you tell me if you like or do not like this school? (Probes: Why? What specifically do you like and dislike?)
18. How are you doing grade-wise at school?
19. How about behavior-wise?
20. Do you find learning hard? (Probes: If so, what subject is difficult for you? If not, what is your favorite subject? Why?)
21. Do you have an individualized education program (IEP)? (Do you know what for? How do you think schools will use this to help you? Has having one helped you in the past? If not, have you heard of an IEP? Do you know what it is?)
22. What do you think school will be like for you once you leave this setting and return to a public school? (Probes: Do you think teachers will see you or treat you differently if they know you were detained prior to returning to school? What classes would you like to take? What would you want your teachers to know about you? How would you want your teachers to treat you?)
23. What are some things you are good at? (Probes: Outside of school? With school? In general what would you would like people to know about you?)
24. What are your plans once you are released? (Probes: With school short-term goals? Long term goals? With life short-term goals? Long term-goals? What would you like to do when you grow up? Who can help you? What do you think you will need to help you?)
25. What are some barriers or challenges you think you will face once you are released from this setting? (Probes: how will you move from one school that is structured, with strict rules, and unable to leave, to a school with many classes and less rules? Where will you live? Who will you live with? What do you think you will need to help you leave this setting and not return? Friends? Family? Teachers?)
26. Tell me about the friends you hung out with at school prior to your current placement? (Probes: Did you have friends in school? Did you have friends outside of the school? Did they help you? Did they want you to do well? How? What were they like?)
27. Tell me about your friends in your current setting? (Probes: Do they help you? Do they want to see you do well? How? What are they like?)
28. In the past, do you think you have done worse or better than your friends? (Probes: Academically? Behaviorally?)

Appendix B

Please read each of the following statements carefully, think about how true it will reflect your school experiences once you transition to a school setting (not your current placement). Then choose how often the statement is true for you by circling one of the numbers in the scale below for each item.

Statements	Never True	Sometimes True	True	True a lot of	Always true
At school I will get the chance to show how much I know	1	2	3	4	5
It will be easy for me to learn new things in school.	1	2	3	4	5
I will meet the challenges of doing well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
Learning will come easy to me.	1	2	3	4	5
My grades will be good in school.	1	2	3	4	5
I will be academically ready to go back to school.	1	2	3	4	5
I will have the academic skills to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5
I will enjoy going to school.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers will treat me with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers will give me choices about how to do my school work.	1	2	3	4	5
Teachers will describe my behavior as good in school.	1	2	3	4	5
My feelings will count in school.	1	2	3	4	5
My teachers will give me choices.	1	2	3	4	5
There will be a teacher or teachers that can help me in school.	1	2	3	4	5
I will feel welcomed at school by my teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
Outside of school, my friends will support me.	1	2	3	4	5
My friends will want me to do well in school.	1	2	3	4	5

I will be able to rely on my friends for support	1	2	3	4	5
I will be able to rely on friends to stay out of trouble	1	2	3	4	5
I will make good decisions when I am with my friends	1	2	3	4	5
I will choose friends who make good decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
My teachers will give me choices.	1	2	3	4	5
I will be respected and cared about by my teachers in school.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Participant Name: _____ Participant ID: _____
Grade: _____ Grade First Identified: _____
IEP Date: _____ Area Eligibility: _____
Date Reviewed: _____

Present Levels of Academic Achievement & Functional Performance (PLAAFP's)

Reading:

Strengths:

Area of Need/Impact of Disability:

++

Accommodations:

Modifications:

Writing:

Strengths:

Area of Need/Impact of Disability:

Accommodations:

Modifications:

Math:
Strengths:

Area of Need/Impact of Disability:

Accommodations:

Modifications:

Behavior:

Strengths:

Area of Need/Impact of Disability:

Accommodations:

Modifications:

Educational Services:

Related Services:

BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan):

Targeted Behaviors of Concerns:

Additional Notes:

Appendix D

Date Reviewed: _____

Participant Name: _____ **Participant ID:** _____

Grade: _____ **Age:** _____

General

Date Of Admission: _____

Legal Status: _____

Circumstances Leading To Referral:

Social

Criminal History:

High Risk Behavior/Risk

Indicators: _____

Family Description

Home Environment/Family Functioning:

Educational

Current Educational Level:

School Problems:

Psychological

Childs Developmental History:

History Of Abuse Or Neglect:

Substance Abuse History:

Outcome/Goals

Anticipated Length Of Stay:

Additional Notes:

Appendix E

IRB USE ONLY

Study Number: 2016-06-0012

Approval Date: 06/27/2016

Expires: 06/27/17

Parental Permission for Children Participation in Research

Title: Incarcerated Hispanic Females with Disabilities: Perceived Barriers Returning to Public Schools

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as the parent or legal guardian of a prospective research study participant) with information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to let your child participate in this research study. The person performing the research will describe the study to you and answer all your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to give your permission for your child to take part. If you decide to let your child be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your permission.

Purpose of the Study

If you agree, your child will be asked to participate in a research study about youth experiences in school and their transition back to a school setting. The purpose of this study is to explore past school experiences of Hispanic females with disabilities who have been detained and to talk about the challenges they feel are important to know when going back to a public school setting.

What is my child going to be asked to do?

If you allow your child to participate in this study, they will be asked to:

Meet with the researcher a total of 4 weeks. Each of the 10 participants will meet with the researcher once a week. Their participation will be audio recorded.

Timeline of activities:

- Week 1: Initial interviewer/interviewee partnership. Meeting time: 60 minutes
- Week 2: Interview protocol data collection. Meeting time: 60-90 minutes
- Week 3: Clarify questions and document reviews. Meeting time: 60 minutes
- Week 4: Finalize last thoughts, member check initial themes, and survey. Meeting time: 60 minutes

The following measures will be used to collect data

- The primary method to obtain information from female youth is specifically designed for this study and will include an interview protocol using a 28-item open-ended questionnaire.

- The second data collection tool will include a 5-point Likert scale survey consisting of 30 questions specifically designed for the study. The survey's goal will be to compare and identify links between the phenomena and the data collected from the interviews. This information will be collected with a scale of 1, 2, or 3 and data will be analyzed.
- The final data collection method will include a document review consisting of the following: demographics, Individualized Education Program (IEPs), Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP's), Full Individual Evaluation (FIE), present levels of functioning and performance, and grade reports. A coding sheet will be used to record information for data analysis.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

Neither you nor your child will receive any direct benefit from participating in this study, however, your child will get the chance to tell their story and share that story with others. Their experiences may help schools in developing trainings to better serve youth in public schools.

Does my child have to participate?

No, your child's participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may decline to participate or to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect their relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway. You can also agree to allow your child to be in the study now and change your mind later without any penalty.

What if my child does not want to participate?

In addition to your permission, your child must agree to participate in the study. If your child does not want to participate they will not be included in the study and there will be no penalty. If your child initially agrees to be in the study they can change their mind later without any penalty.

Will there be any compensation?

Neither you nor your child will receive any type of payment participating in this study.

How will your child's privacy and confidentiality be protected if she participates in this research study?

Your child's privacy and the confidentiality of her data will be protected by being assigned a personal identification number, which will protect their privacy and the confidentiality of their data. The interviews will take place at a location on the school campus. Any information collected with this study and that can be identified with your child will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone without your permission. Names of participants and schools will be changed to protect your child's

privacy. During the course of the study, audiotapes will be kept secure in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office. The audiotapes will be heard only for research purposes by the investigator involved in the study. Once the audiotaped interviews are documented, transcribed, and analyzed, the audiotape will be erased.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to your child will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your child's research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your child's participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could be associated with your child, or with your child's participation in any study.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher Veronica Ruiz at 512-997-8872 or send an email to veronica.ruiz@austin.utexas.edu for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is **[2016-06-0012]**.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?

For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Signature

You are making a decision about allowing your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow them to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your child to participate in the study you may discontinue his or her participation at any time. You will be given a copy of this document.

Printed Name of Child

Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian

Signature of Investigator

Appendix F

IRB USE ONLY

Study Number: 2016-06-0012

Approval Date: 06/27/2016

Expires: 06/27/17

Permiso de los Padres para la Participación de Niños en una Investigación

Título: Las hembras presos hispanos con Discapacidad: barreras percibidas que vuelven a las Escuelas Públicas

Introducción

El propósito de este formulario es proporcionarle a usted (como el padre o tutor legal de un estudio prospectivo participante en el estudio) con información que pueda afectar su decisión en cuanto a si o no permitir que su hijo participe en este estudio de investigación. La persona que realiza la investigación describirá el estudio y responderá a todas sus preguntas. Lea la siguiente información y haga cualquier pregunta que pueda tener antes de decidir si debe o no dar su permiso para que su hijo participe. Si decide dejar a su hijo participar en este estudio, esta forma será utilizada para registrar su permiso.

Propósito del Estudio

Si está de acuerdo, se le pedirá a su hijo a participar en un estudio de investigación sobre las experiencias de la juventud en la escuela y su transición de regreso a un entorno escolar. El propósito de este estudio es explorar las experiencias escolares anteriores de las mujeres hispanas con discapacidad que han sido detenidos y para hablar de los retos a los que se sienten son importantes para saber cuándo volver a una escuela pública.

¿Qué le van a pedir a su hijo/a que haga?

Si permite que su hijo participe en este estudio, se les pedirá a:

Reunirse con el investigador un total de 4 semanas. Cada uno de los 10 participantes se reunirán con el investigador una vez a la semana. Su participación será de audio grabado.

Cronología de las actividades:

Semana 1: entrevistador / entrevistado asociación inicial. Hora de encuentro: 60 minutos

Semana 2: recopilación de datos Protocolo de entrevista. Hora de encuentro: 60-90 minutos

Semana 3: Aclarar preguntas y revisiones de documentos. Hora de encuentro: 60 minutos

Semana 4: Finalizar últimos pensamientos, temas iniciales de verificación, y miembro de la encuesta. Hora de encuentro: 60 minutos

Las siguientes medidas se utilizarán para recopilar datos

- El método principal para obtener información de la juventud femenina está diseñado específicamente para este estudio e incluirá un protocolo de entrevista utilizando un cuestionario de preguntas abiertas de 28 ítems.
- La segunda herramienta de recolección de datos incluirá una encuesta escala de Likert de 5 puntos que consta de 30 preguntas diseñadas específicamente para el estudio.
El objetivo de la encuesta será comparar e identificar vínculos entre los fenómenos y los datos recogidos de las entrevistas. Esta información se recoge con una escala de 1, 2, ó 3, y se analizarán los datos.
- El último método de recogida de datos incluirá una revisión de documentos que consiste en lo siguiente: la demografía, el Programa de Educación Individualizada (IEP), Plan de Intervención de Comportamiento (de BIP), Evaluación Individual (FIE), los niveles actuales de funcionamiento y el rendimiento, y los informes de calificaciones. Una hoja de codificación se puede utilizar para grabar información para el análisis de datos.

¿Cuáles son los riesgos involucrados en este estudio?

No hay riesgos previsibles para participar en este estudio.

¿Cuáles son los posibles beneficios de relacionados con este estudio?

Ni usted ni su hijo recibirá ningún beneficio directo de la participación en este estudio, sin embargo, su hijo va a tener la oportunidad de contar su historia y compartir esa historia con otros. Sus experiencias pueden ayudar a las escuelas en el desarrollo de cursos de formación para servir mejor a los jóvenes en las escuelas públicas.

¿Su hijo/a tiene que participar?

No, la participación de su hijo en este estudio es voluntaria. Su niño puede negarse a participar o dejar de participar en cualquier momento. Retirada o negarse a participar no afectará su relación con la Universidad de Texas en Austin (Universidad) de todos modos. También pueden ponerse de acuerdo para permitir que su hijo participe en el estudio ahora y cambiar de opinión más tarde sin ninguna penalización.

¿Qué pasará si mi hijo/a no desea participar?

Además de su permiso, su hijo debe estar de acuerdo en participar en el estudio. Si su hijo no quiere participar no serán incluidos en el estudio y no habrá ninguna penalización. Si su hijo inicialmente se compromete a participar en el estudio pueden cambiar de opinión más tarde sin ninguna penalización.

¿Habrá alguna compensación?

Ni usted ni su hijo recibirá ningún tipo de pago que participan en este estudio.

¿Cómo será protegida la privacidad y confidencialidad de su hijo/a si participa en este estudio de investigación?

privacidad de su hijo y la confidencialidad de sus datos estarán protegidos por ser asignado un número de identificación personal, que protegerá su privacidad y la confidencialidad de sus datos. Las entrevistas se llevarán a cabo en un lugar en el campus de la escuela. Toda la información recogida en este estudio y que puede identificarse con su hijo permanecerá confidencial y no será compartida con nadie sin su permiso. Los nombres de los participantes y las escuelas serán cambiados para proteger la privacidad de su hijo. Durante el curso del estudio, cintas de audio estarán seguros en un armario cerrado con llave en la oficina del investigador. Las cintas de audio se escuchará sólo

para fines de investigación por el investigador involucrado en el estudio. Una vez que las entrevistas grabadas están documentados, transcritas y analizadas, se borrará la cinta de audio.

Si se hace necesario que la Junta de Revisión Institucional para revisar los registros del estudio, la información que se puede vincular a su niño estará protegido en la medida permitida por la ley. registros de la investigación de su hijo no se dará a conocer sin su consentimiento a menos que lo requiera la ley o una orden judicial. Los datos resultantes de la participación de su hijo puede ponerse a disposición de otros investigadores en el futuro para fines de investigación que no se detallan en este formulario de consentimiento. En estos casos, los datos no contienen información de identificación que podría estar asociado con su hijo, o con la participación de su hijo en cualquier estudio.

¿A quién contactar con preguntas acerca del estudio?

Antes, durante o después de la participación del usuario puede ponerse en contacto con el investigador Verónica Ruiz al 512-997-8872 o envíe un correo electrónico a veronica.ruiz@austin.utexas.edu para cualquier pregunta o si usted piensa que ha sido perjudicado.

Este estudio ha sido revisado y aprobado por la Junta de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad y el número de estudio es [2016-06-0012].

¿A quién contactar con preguntas con respecto a sus derechos como participante de la investigación?

Para preguntas acerca de sus derechos o cualquier insatisfacción con cualquier parte de este estudio, puede ponerse en contacto, de forma anónima si así lo desea, la Junta de Revisión Institucional por teléfono al (512) 471-8871 o al correo electrónico orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Firma

Usted está tomando una decisión en cuanto a permitir que su hijo participe en este estudio. Su firma indica que ha leído la información proporcionada anteriormente y han decidido que les permita participar en el estudio. Si más adelante decide que desea retirar su permiso para que su hijo participe en el estudio se puede discontinuar su participación en cualquier momento. Se le dará una copia de este documento.

_____ Autorizo que mi hijo/a sea grabado en [audio/video].
_____ No Autorizo que mi hijo/a sea grabado en [audio/video].

Nombre del niño/a en letra de molde

Firma del padre/madre o tutor legalFecha

Firma del Investigador Fecha

Appendix G

IRB USE ONLY

Study Number: 2016-06-0012

Approval Date: 06/27/2016

Expires: 06/27/17

Assent for Participation in Research

Title: Incarcerated Hispanic Females with Disabilities: Perceived Barriers Returning to Public Schools

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study

If you agree, you will be asked to participate in a research study about youth experiences in school and their transition back to a school setting. The purpose of this study is to explore past school experiences of Hispanic females with disabilities who have been detained and to talk about the challenges they feel are important to know when going back to a public school setting.

What am I going to be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Meet with the researcher a total of 4 weeks. Each of the 10 participants will meet with the researcher once a week. Your participation will be audio recorded.

Timeline of activities:

Week 1: Initial interviewer/interviewee partnership. Meeting time: 60 minutes

Week 2: Interview protocol data collection. Meeting time: 60-90 minutes

Week 3: Clarify questions and document reviews. Meeting time: 60 minutes

Week 4: Finalize last thoughts, member check initial themes, and survey. Meeting time: 60 minutes

The following measures will be used to collect data

The primary method to obtain information from female youth is specifically designed for this study and will include an interview protocol using a 28-item open-ended questionnaire.

The second data collection tool will include a 5-point Likert scale survey consisting of 30 questions specifically designed for the study. The survey's goal will be to compare and identify links between the phenomena and the data collected from the interviews. This information will be collected with a scale of 1, 2, or 3 and data will be analyzed.

The final data collection method will include a document review consisting of the following: demographics, Individualized Education Program (IEPs), Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP's), Full Individual Evaluation (FIE), present levels of functioning and performance, and grade reports. A coding sheet will be used to record information for data analysis.

The IRB may audit study records at any time.

What are the risks involved in this study?

There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study.

Do I have to participate?

No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin (University) in anyway.

If you would like to participate in this study, please sign this consent form. Your signature indicates that you have read or someone has read aloud to you the information and you have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time after signing this form if you decide not to participate in this study.

Will I get anything to participate?

You will not receive any type of payment for participating in this study.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

The records of this study will be kept private. This includes your name and personal information. Your responses may be used for a future study by these researchers or other researchers.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?

Prior, during, or after your participation you can contact the researcher Veronica Ruiz at 512-997-8872 or send an email to veronica.ruiz@austin.utexas.edu for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed.

Signature

Writing your name on this page means that the page was read by or to you and that you agree to be in the study. If you have any questions before, after or during the study, ask the person in charge. If you decide to quit the study, all you have to do is tell the person in charge.

Signature of Participant Date

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Vita

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